

*also by Michael Sadleir*

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TROLLOPE  
A Commentary

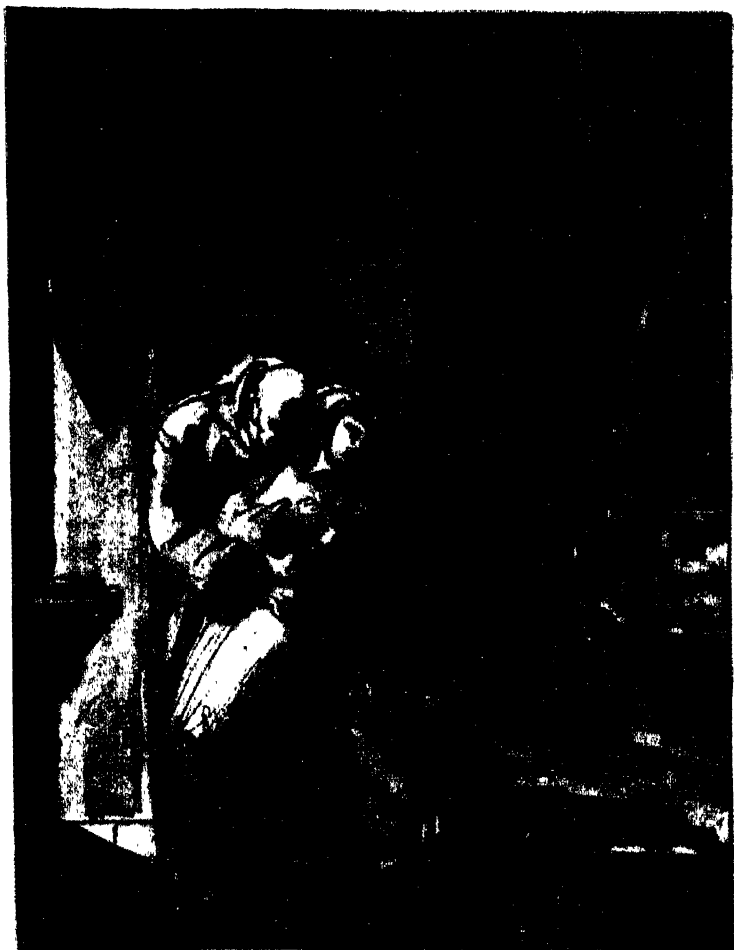
BULWER AND HIS WIFE

BLESSINGTON D'ORSAY  
A Masquerade

---

FANNY BY GASLIGHT  
THESE FOOLISH THINGS  
DESOLATE SPLENDOUR





“ALL HORRID?”

FROM AN ORIGINAL WATER-COLOUR BY COMTE DE FORBIN (1779-1841)  
*illustrating Chap. XI of vol. III of THE MONK (1796) by M. G. Lewis,*  
*in which Ambrosio lifts the drugged Antonia from the tomb in the vaults of St. Clare.*

MICHAEL SADLEIR

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THINGS  
PAST

*With a Frontispiece*

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CONSTABLE · LONDON



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY DEAR FATHER  
SEVERAL OF THE ESSAYS WERE READ  
ALoud DURING HIS LAST ILLNESS, AND HIS  
CRITICISMS AND SUGGESTIONS WERE, AS ALWAYS,  
INVALUABLE · HE IT WAS WHO, AT AN EARLIER STAGE,  
DISCOVERED AND GAVE ME THE DRAWING WHICH SERVES  
AS FRONTISPIECE; HE IT WAS WHO ENABLED ME TO BENE-  
FIT BY SOME DIRECT OXFORD REMINISCENCES OF  
RHODA BROUGHTON · IT IS SAD THAT I  
WAS AFTER ALL UNABLE TO PUT A  
FINISHED COPY IN HIS HAND  
BEFORE THE END CAME.

*First published September 1944*  
*Reprinted September 1944*

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## A U T H O R ' S N O T E

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FOR THEIR kind permission to include in this volume (in revised and often re-written form) such portions of the Contents as have previously been printed, my thanks are due to the Editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*, for Nos. 1, 3 and 9 (ii), also for portions of 5 and 6; to the Editor of *The New Statesman* for a section of 8; to the representatives of Messrs. Ingpen and Grant for 12; to Mr. Stanley Unwin for 2 (iii); to Mr. Basil Blackwell for 2 (i); to Messrs. Constable for 2 (ii) and another section of 8; to the English Association for one portion of 10, and to the Oxford University Press for another; and to the Bibliographical Society for 11.

Access to the hitherto unpublished letters from Sheridan Le Fanu and Rhoda Broughton to George Bentley, was kindly given by Mrs. Richard Bentley, while Messrs. Macmillan were good enough to allow me a sight of a few Rhoda Broughton letters of the late period.

Finally, grateful acknowledgment must be made to Miss Helen Waddell for her help in revising several of the Essays.

## Life and Letters

H E N R Y      K I N G S L E Y

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*This tribute to the genius of Henry Kingsley and lament for the misfortunes which overshadowed the last years of his comparatively short life, was first printed in January, 1930, anonymously and in substantially the same form as that here presented. In the summer of 1931 was published S. M. Ellis' book Henry Kingsley: Towards a Vindication, a workmanlike, if at times an irrelevant production, which bore witness to its author's outstanding qualities—resource and industry in the unearthing of facts and documents. Ellis' book, as the sub-title implies, was designed to correct what was in his view a tendency to over-dramatize Kingsley's dégringolade; and, although he did not say so, there can be little doubt that he regarded the article reprinted below as mainly responsible for the trouble. The review of his book, printed on 6th August, 1931, in the same paper as that in which my article appeared, dotted the i's and crossed the t's of Ellis' argument. The reviewer said, almost in so many words, that unfounded insinuations against Kingsley's character had been made in a Centenary article and elsewhere, and that it was high time they were contradicted and dispelled.*

Now, more than ten years later, after re-reading my essay, Ellis' book and his reviewer's column of moral indignation, I am not disposed to alter what I wrote, save in one or two matters of detail. Nor am I prepared to allow that any "shuffling apologies for some weakness, sin or crime" are offered in the essay—that being one of the elegant charges brought against it. Indeed the essay appears to me to invoke on Kingsley's behalf no emotion save admiration and pity. Admittedly it cannot be proved that he left Oxford under a cloud; but neither Ellis nor his reviewer can prove that he did not. My statement that Mrs. Charles Kingsley, who was always Henry's enemy, "took her revenge after Charles's death by blotting him out entirely from the record of her husband's life" provoked both Ellis and his reviewer to scornful shrugs. Certainly (they say) she never mentioned Henry; but neither did she mention his brother George nor,

*save incidentally, his sister Charlotte. True; but why should she? Neither of them was half as intimate with Charles as was Henry; neither of them lived with or next door to Charles for over six years; neither of them shared with Charles membership of the inner Macmillan circle, or owed to him a splendid start in a career of authorship. I am afraid I must insist that Mrs. Charles Kingsley's hatred of Henry is obvious; and can only have arisen from the resentment felt by complacent conventionality for desultory bohemianism.*

*When all is said, the personality of a writer about whom strangely little is known (for Ellis, although he unearthed a remarkable number of incidental facts and printed a quantity of unpublished and rather uninteresting letters, does not really give a coherent portrait of Kingsley the human being) can only be judged through his books. My judgment may be a wrong one, may well in places be over-coloured. But I believe it to be in the main correct, and therefore let it stand.*

HENRY, fourth son of the Reverend Charles Kingsley, was born at Barnack in Northamptonshire on 2nd January 1830. He lived only to the age of forty-six; and a neglected wooden cross, leaning crazily over a neglected grave in a Sussex churchyard, marked the end of his short, erratic and unhappy pilgrimage about a world which neither loved nor honoured him.<sup>1</sup> They carved a text upon his tomb: "In Thy presence is the fullness of joy"; and the words, nearly weathered to illegibility, had bitterness as well as pathos. No man was readier for joy in life than Henry Kingsley; few, with his talents and his opportunities, achieved so little. Perhaps the hereafter has redressed the balance, and given happiness to one who, partly by his own weakness, partly by the cruel virtue of his time, was balked of it.

When Henry was seven, his father was appointed to the living of Chelsea; and the old rectory in Church Street, which is described so vividly in *The Hillyars and the Burtons*, must during the next few years have seen much riotous and eager family life. Charles, the most remarkable of the three

<sup>1</sup> In December, 1931, a memorial designed by Mr. Arnold Whittick was erected by public subscription over the grave at Cuckfield.

Kingsley boys (the fourth son died in infancy), was eleven years Henry's senior and, when the move to London took place, was already on the threshold of his strenuous career as social propagandist, preacher, novelist and historian. Doubtless he was often enough at Chelsea; but his contribution to the young life of the house would have been rather to talk and set his juniors wondering at his knowledge and at the fury of his idealisms, than to join their games. For actual companions Henry had his other brother and a sister, both of whom were to prove their share of the amazing Kingsley brilliance. George became the witty and fearless Dr. Kingsley—who fought the cholera in Flintshire in 1849 without a care for his own risk, who sailed the South Seas with Lord Pembroke, who could keep any dinner-table enthralled with his now legendary conversation, who left, besides some translations of Paul Heyse and a learned work on Chaucer, some vivid "Notes on Sport and Travel", for his daughter to edit and another generation to enjoy. Charlotte married the Vicar of Ilfracombe, and under her married name of Chanter wrote, among other things, a remarkable novel *Over the Cliffs*, which, though forgotten now, will one day be rediscovered.

Thus companioned, and a day-boy at King's College School, Henry went through his teens until in 1850 he entered Worcester College, Oxford. It was the year when his brother's *Alton Locke* was published; and the fierce partisanship of a still anonymous Christian Socialist was troubling the conscience or alarming the security of comfortable novel-readers. Henry knew who had written *Alton Locke*; had probably heard its author declaim of Chartism and the miseries of the poor; and all that was in himself of youthful enthusiasm, flaming pity and word-eloquence (which was a great deal) was ready to burst forth to celebrate his brother's triumph and to support his brother's—or indeed any righteous—cause. It is possibly a part explanation of Henry's Oxford adventures that he was thus early keyed up to self-expression by Charles's provocative success. Certainly he lost no time in giving vent to his high spirits; and it is not easy to account for his simultaneous development along the rarely parallel

lines of rowdiness and aggressive uprightness, save by attributing both to the influence of an elder brother who had challenged society with a book at once subversive and pugnaciously Christian.

The few reminiscences which survive of Henry Kingsley's three years at Oxford all agree in describing him as a queer blend of dissipation and rectitude. He was noisy, a perpetual smoker, a foremost rowdy at bump-suppers, probably a cracker of stock-whips after dark and none too sober after the various beanos habitual to his kind. But all of this would fit his own interpretation of manliness, partnered as it was with athletic skill and keenness (he was a fine oar, whose name is on the roll of Henley, a spirited horseman, and a good fencer) and the power to strike an attitude of nobility without admitting it an attitude. There are occasional Oxford memories in his books. The bump-supper and college meeting in *Ravenhoe* are well known; but there is an obscurer work which in this connection is even more significant. In a short story of his called *Jackson of Pauls*, a story full of the infuriating mixture of priggishness and verve so characteristic of him, an already broken man evokes for us the spirit of his eager, foolish youth. "Pauls" is Worcester; and the exploits of the undergraduates—bonfire, torpids, rustication and all—are probably Henry Kingsley's exploits, while the David-and-Jonathan sentiment of Jackson and Devereſt, the rather ranting chivalry toward "our women" (as opposed to those of any other kind), and the perpetual gentlemanliness of every one concerned, are elements which we must regard as inevitable in all his books.

One can well believe that in Henry Kingsley the college-boy there was—as the phrase goes—"no real harm". But it is never easy for an exuberant youth to realize where society draws the line between wild spirits and wild oats; and in the early fifties the distinction was abnormally fine. Wherefore it is not surprising that in 1853 happened a real row. Its nature has never been revealed, though it may perhaps be surmised; but it was a bad row, and rumour says that Charles came to the rescue in person and with cash. The scapegoat

vanished to Australia, without a degree. A proper scandal. Was it the end of Henry Kingsley or the making of him?

Alas! Neither quite one nor the other. It lost him for ever the good will—even the tolerance—of his sister-in-law, who, although while Charles was alive she never succeeded in turning the successful brother against his unlucky junior, took her revenge after Charles's death by blotting Henry out entirely from the record of her husband's life. To this extent was Henry "finished" by his misbehaviour. But more important than his ultimate exclusion from the Kingsley legend was the immediate reaction of the incident upon his mind and character. He was at a dangerous moment of semi-maturity. The headiness and instability of youth might have been diverted into constructive talent; instead, they were so heavily punished as to become permanently a part of him. Potentially the young man had all his brother Charles's descriptive power, perhaps even a deeper love of English landscape, certainly a readier, racier humour. But he lacked the fixity of purpose which kept Charles strong in pursuit of an ideal; he lacked the faith which in Charles subjected imaginative brilliance to pride in personal integrity; and the miniature social catastrophe which was the removal from Oxford to Australia, destroyed the only opportunity which Henry might have had of learning to control the luxuriant force of Kingsley genius by some deep conviction—spiritual, social or æsthetic.

Instead he learnt to pretend, even to himself; and as soon as he began to write, the pitiful little compromise which he had made with his own weakness immediately betrayed itself. As though conscious of his lack of guiding impulse, he borrowed the noble attitudes of his family and his caste, and sought, by striking them emphatically, to make them genuine. Had he only had time to be accepted for what he longed to be—an upright English gentleman—the attitudes would have become, if not actually genuine, at least so much a part of himself as to serve as genuine. But the sudden interruption of his career, and the disappearance to (of all places for the fifties) Australia, wrecked his chance of imposing—alike on others and on himself—the character for which he yearned.



For the Australian adventure at the actual moment of its coming Henry was probably ready enough. His personal courage and love of risk (which never deserted him) would have been at their hottest; and, in the mood of defiance natural to a youth in his position, he would easily adopt the attitude of a restless adventurer too spirited for the dull activities of English respectability. In the novel *Stretton* Roland Evans (a paragon even for this creator of paragons) suddenly abandons his estates, and at the age of twenty-one plunges into the turmoil of the Indian Mutiny. He has already a name for defending the French Revolution in brilliant talk among his Oxford friends, to whom, when at last they demand the reason for "this fantastic balderdash" he replies:

I don't know. I am sick of my life—and for no reason—at least for no reason which these wretched Philistines can give me. What is before me? The Schools? Bah—a double first—and then to drop back on my position as a country gentleman. I tell you that I am utterly sick of my whole future career. From this moment I give it up. Vive la Révolution! I am for India.

Whither he goes and, of course, covers himself with glory. But Henry Kingsley, in one of the asides to the reader which he too often permits himself, thus comments on Roland's recklessness:

That Roland behaved like a fool I do not deny. But he was only twenty-one. In looking for a precedent for his remarkable conduct just look at your own conduct when you were twenty-one. Did you not do generous and carelessly foolish things which you would not do now? In the Australian madness of 1852, how many men do I know who, sick of things here, gave up safe positions in England out of the pure old English spirit of adventure?

In this light, undoubtedly, did Henry Kingsley come to regard his own journey to the Antipodes.

Of his activities in Australia as little definite evidence survives as of the other phases of his forgotten life. But a few facts are certain. His five years were mainly spent in New South Wales and Victoria. He was for a time a trooper in the Sydney Mounted Police; and his experiences in breaking up gangs of bushrangers find place in more than one of his books. There is a tradition that he wrote a part of *Geoffry Hamlyn* in James Mitchell's house near Melbourne; and Rolf Boldrewood refers to him in *Old Melbourne Memories* as writing and living quietly there after much stormier times. Almost certainly he visited the goldfields; inevitably he rioted in saloons and drank too much and generally, in the traditional ways, revenged himself on the respectability of home by giving licence to his liberty.

In 1858 he reappeared in England. It was an unexpected return, for his family had heard no word from him for five years, and Mrs. Charles Kingsley at least may well have hoped that they were done with him. But Charles, now Rector of Eversley and already famous as novelist, essayist and preacher, acted with generous loyalty. He took Henry into his house and at once used his great influence with the group of writers who centred round the publishing house of Macmillan to get his brother accepted as a member of their circle. *Geoffry Hamlyn* was read with enthusiasm by Alexander Macmillan, was published in 1859 and widely praised. Henry made friends with Matthew Arnold and Huxley and Dean Stanley and Lewis Carroll. Had he indeed got back again?

For some years at any rate all went well. He followed his first novel with the far finer *Ravenshoe* (1862); *Austin Elliott* (1863) was full of promise of a constructive skill hitherto lacking. In 1864 he married, and went to live at Wargrave, near Henley. *The Hillyars and the Burtons*, his second masterly treatment of an Australian theme, appeared in 1865, *Leighton Court* in 1866, *Silcote of Silcotes* in 1867.<sup>1</sup> Still the ground

<sup>1</sup> S. M. Ellis acutely identified "Miss Lee", the governess in *Silcote of Silcotes*, with Henry Kingsley's wife who, as Miss Sarah Haselwood, had been governess to the children of the Rev. Gerald Blunt, Rector of Chelsea in succession to Henry's father. He adds the suggestion that possibly "Arthur Silcote" is Henry Kingsley's conception of himself at the time of his marriage.

looked solid beneath his re-established feet. But the good times were now nearly over. After two or three years at Wargrave the clouds began to gather. Possibly gossip of Henry's past reached the ears of his neighbours; probably money was short, for progressively the books sank in popularity; most tragically, but at the same time most probably—this the novels themselves suggest—the old habits began creeping back. In 1869 the household was broken up. Mrs. Kingsley moved desolately from one lodging to another. Henry, after a short period of editorial hackwork in Edinburgh, went out as war correspondent with the German armies, and in their wake watched the swift and terrible drama of the Franco-Prussian War. This experience was so suited to his taste and temperament that one wonders whether, could it have occurred a few years earlier, it might not have given him a new and precious lease of life. Certainly while in the field he regained his old swashbuckling courage, his gaiety and his zest for hazardous adventure. The scenes in Trier, Metz and Luxembourg; the memories of Longwy and Sedan, which occur so frequently in his last half-dozen novels, have a sharpness and energy in pitiful contrast to the rest of their context. Henry Kingsley enjoyed himself as war correspondent, responding alike to the heroism and the horror with all the reckless force of his emotionalism. The first Englishman to enter Metz, he was actually present at the débâcle of Sedan. There is a story that at one time during the battle he was shut up for hours in the station ticket-office, and spent his time stamping all the tickets he could find for imaginary journeys from Sedan to every part of France. These tickets, he maintained, with their indisputable dates, would confuse all future historians. It sounds a likely legend. Not only had he that kind of sense of humour, but he would take a defiant joy in dicing in the very face of death.

There is suitable irony in the fact that Laurence Oliphant—another fine mind already sagging ominously—was a colleague of Henry Kingsley's in the same campaign. Whether the two correspondents met is not recorded; but neither the mocking fatalism of Oliphant nor Kingsley's love of the fantastic tricks

of fate could have conceived a situation more complete than a meeting between two such men—both semi-exiles from their native land, both on the downward slope to mental disintegration—on a non-English battlefield piled with non-English corpses, while, as Kingsley at least would have remarked, the night-wind was ruffling the dead men's hair.

The war over, Henry Kingsley came miserably home again. His mind was a turmoil of ideas and restlessness, but his controls were so weakened as to make ordered production impossible. He and his wife settled to an unhappy raffish life in London, while by desperate pot-boiling he worked to keep alive. In 1873 came the death of his brother Charles, and the only effective influence for good which Henry had known was finally withdrawn. In 1875 the solitary pair moved to a cottage at Cuckfield in Sussex.<sup>1</sup> Henry was already ill, but writing feverishly. In May 1876, he died.

Henry Kingsley's books cannot—any more than can his life-story—be considered without reference to his dominant elder brother. Contemporary and other critics (and present-day readers must to some extent agree with them) have reproached Charles Kingsley's earliest works—*Yeast* and *Alton Locke*—with formlessness. Certainly they have the inconsequence of controversial zeal. The writer's mind was so full of imagined characters and words and indignations that he could not spare time to order their outflow, but let them gush over on every side, to the distraction of the reader and the thwarting of his own vigorous intention. With *Hypatia*, however, he mastered his material; and it is their triumphant blend of learning, pictorial splendour, characterization and incident which have established that book and *Westward Ho!* as classics of English narrative literature. But Henry, even in his prime and before mental incoherence added its final handicap, never succeeded in mastering his material. He could break in a horse and stand up in fight to any man alive, but his own thoughts and characters were too much for him. Only

<sup>1</sup> During the 1930's this little house carried a sign-board: THE WESTWARD HO! CAFÉ. This gives the measure of the impression made by Henry, as a Kingsley in his own right, on the township where he died.

the English language was his slave, and on that he played as a great musician on his instrument. Of course, the failure to discipline his written work was part of his inability to discipline himself. As a man he was all over the place; as a novelist (style always apart) he is slapdash, promiscuous and crude. He will not pivot his crowded tales on any central idea; he drops, sometimes within the limits of a single sentence, from high seriousness to breathless flippancy. Also (and in this as well he was doubtless influenced by Charles) he will interpolate at any moment some fragment of instructional fact, will quaintly display his own knowledge—whether of real life or of science or of natural history—without any regard for the balance of his story or the presumed inclination of his reader.

But if Henry shares (and exaggerates) some of Charles's faults, he also shares (and even adorns) two of Charles's greatest qualities. As word-painter of landscape he is probably unexcelled by any English novelist; as master of the subtle music of prose, as maker of beautiful phrases, he is unrivalled. The Australian scenes in *Geoffrey Hamlyn* and *The Hillyars* had such an effect upon contemporary readers that the two books became part of the bible of Australian and Imperial faith. In 1923 there was published in *The Times Literary Supplement* a letter from Sir George Trevelyan, in which he recalled the assertion of Alfred Deakin that these novels were almost the "Charter of Australia".

As a descriptive novelist of war Henry Kingsley is no less memorable. Flashes of the Mutiny in *Stretton*; the clumsy but vivid handling of the campaign of Montebello in *Silcote of Silcotes*; the Franco-Prussian conflict, not only in *Valentin*, but incidentally also in *The Harveys*; and above all the Crimean scenes in *Ravenshoe* may in these days of fictional records of the latest and most hideous of wars claim to be read or, if already read, then read again. The sea also—its storms and quiet and all the myriad monotony of its moods and colours—provoked some of his most tuneful writing.

Yet it is perhaps as artist of his beloved English countryside that he achieves his greatest beauty. Whether his subject be a

great country house, a woodland glade aflame with turning bracken, the cliffs above the sea, a bathing pool, a wide valley of meadows, he puts all the colour, all the scent, all the age-long serenity of English life into those lovely lilting paragraphs, which have, perhaps intentionally, much of the quality of the contemporary poet most admired by their creator—the quality of Swinburne. Rarely indeed have the musical possibilities of English prose been so brilliantly exploited as by Henry Kingsley at his best. Read the chapter of *Ravenshoe* entitled “The Black Hare”—full twenty pages of pure beauty, vigorous and clean with the fresh breeze of the glorious November morning when Charles and Mary and the rest went coursing on the downs; read the scene of Cuthbert’s drowning (also in *Ravenshoe*), a scene so fair and yet so menacing, so poignant yet so utterly at peace; read all (or nearly all) the descriptions of great houses that he loved to write and wrote so well—Casterton, Cottingdean, Marksworth, Stretton, Sheepsden, Ravenshoe itself; read the account of sunset on Snowdon, and of Ronaldsay in the grip of ice and snow from *Austin Elliott*; read of the volcano in eruption from the second volume of *The Hillyars and the Burtons*.

Other examples will be found in *Silcote of Silcotes* and in *Old Margaret*; too long for quotation or, maybe, too involved with the narrative to be extracted for themselves. But here are three brief passages from yet other novels which may be quoted, partly in evidence of what has been claimed for Kingsley as a stylist, partly for the sake of their own faultless and exciting harmony:

He turned to the left out of the Bell Yard, and broke into a gallop. Then I saw that he was going to try the sands that night; and I cried out, like a man in the falling sickness, “The tide’s making! The tide’s making!” Perhaps he did not hear; at all events he did not heed. I ran, but what was the good of that? I heard him only a few minutes, but I ran on, guessing which way he had gone; and all I could find of him was the way that the deer stood gazing as he had startled them.—*Leighton Court*.

Down below in the valley, among the meadows, the lanes and the fords, it was nearly as peaceful and quiet as it was aloft on the mountain-tops; and under the darkening shadows of the rapidly leafing elms you could hear—it was so still—the cows grazing and the trout rising in the river.

—*Stretton.*

Even in the summer, when the valley below was still, peaceful and calm, some wandering wind always found its way into the hollow where the old house stood and in some way raised mournful music; either sighing through the dry grass of the wold; or whispering to the scattered junipers; or raising fitfully a lonely sound like falling water among the elms which surrounded the house. The furious south-west from Brittany, from the wild quicksands of Mont St. Michel, from the tossing-woods of Dinan, from the desolate druid rocks of Morbihan, was the most refreshing wind they got; and that howled and piped and raved among their eaves and chimneys, as if each cairn and menhir had yielded up the spirits of the dead priests, and they were riding on the blast, full shriek'd with their immeasurable woes.

—*Mademoiselle Mathilde.*

Beauty of language apart, the novels of Henry Kingsley must depend for approval or dislike very much on the idiosyncrasy of readers' taste. That he can be amusing will be generally admitted. His swift appreciation of the ludicrous, or—in the case of children or animals—of the clumsily lovable, is the more impressive for being allied with the mawkish solemnity of (in a literary sense) his party manners. And once more the explanation of the contrast is an explanation of the man himself. In real life uncertain of his own position and morbidly afraid of criticism, he was, when writing, so eager to placate conventional English prejudice that, whenever he felt his theme or his characters likely to offend against it, he would at any moment let the unity of his story go by the board and fall to fervent expression of manly cordiality, of womanly tenderness, of Sabbatarian pomposity. But at other times—and particularly when concerned with young people or dogs

or the aloof eccentricity of persons who cared as little for British propriety as in his heart of hearts did their creator himself—he was without self-consciousness, without dread of disapproval, and let his naturally impertinent and cheerful fancy have free play. It is to Henry Kingsley in this mood of non-pretence that we owe the unaffected portraits of children, the loving delineations of animals, the continual glimpses of topical incident and taste, the views on contemporary painting and literature, the refreshing outbreaks of anti-spiritualism, of pacifism and of other fiercely-held opinions. These might well be tiresome in novels of a more pretentiously literary character, but not only are they wholly in keeping with the dashing jumble of people, views and things which was Henry Kingsley's conception of fiction, they also help to give his work the essential quality of readability.

Indeed, dullness is a fault of which he is very rarely guilty. As "Q" wrote, nearly fifty years ago:

In all Henry's books I have not found a single dull page. He may be trivial, inconsequent, irrelevant, absurd, but he never wearies. . . . I think it is to the conversational quality of their style—at once ridiculous and good-humoured, impertinent and surprising—that his best books owe a great deal of their charm.

That is a deserved tribute, and one which any novelist would be glad to earn.

In the end, however, even readability went the way of Henry Kingsley's other qualities. As the man crumbled, the books crumbled also; and perhaps the saddest feature of his last half-dozen works is the gradual collapse, not only of their spirit and design, but even of their interest. In truth they are the books of a sick man, whose failing strength could keep up during the first hours of the morning (or could, maybe, be keyed up by stimulants), then wilted and drooped to nothing. Again and again he contrives a good opening; even in the course of a story he manages to lash his flagging brain to prepare for one of the dramatic crises which he loved to write;



but before the book has got half-way, before the drama is fully played, strength has failed, interest has died. He botches the thing together to a perfunctory conclusion; scrawls "finis"; and, having sent another failure to his publisher, sits back, exhausted but anxious, waiting for his meagre pay.

It is curious to reflect how absolutely the curve of Henry Kingsley's life and work would, in another, have appealed to his peculiar and romantic imagination. He had an intense sympathy for decayed splendour, for buildings and families and individuals whose great days are gone, leaving a once proud structure to neglect or to defacement. Decadence after early promise or rejection after a period of glory must, without his quite realizing the fact, have struck some secret chord of feeling. His worship of the beauty of boyhood and young manhood is fundamentally as much a lament for the evanescence of loveliness as admiration for the loveliness itself. Just as he could look at a once dignified mansion in a built-up London suburb and relish the pathos of its one-time elegance, now smothered with shop-front or scarred with tradesmen's signs, so he could alike look backward from forlorn age to youth and forward from golden youth to age, with a wry smile at both retrospect and prophecy.

And not only did he find melancholy but delicious stimulus in the fact of failure or neglect, but he was sensitive to the usual injustice of their incidence. He compares one of his characters to Louis XVI of France—"the last, the kindest, the best of those who stuck to the old rule—the one most severely punished". The analogy is at once acute and very characteristic; and it is right that Henry Kingsley, who himself paid a far heavier penalty than he deserved for failure to conform to the conventions of his time, should give his ready sympathy to persons, to animals and to things which, being before their time or after it, suffered likewise from the harshness of a period majority.

Should posterity come to respect Henry Kingsley for what he may fairly be termed—the prose-laureate of wasted beauty—then will his sad life not have been lived in vain. His faults

as a writer can never be overlooked; but they will be forgiven by all who recognize his merits. To few English novelists—if indeed to any—have been given such swift and humorous vigour, such power of perpetuating loveliness, such unfailing instinct for the rhythm of language. Were there now to be published an anthology of passages from Henry Kingsley's works, it should provoke wonder and excitement. "Why," the reader would exclaim, "is this splendid writer not among the great names of our literature?" The question would be but one of many, cried vainly into the darkness where his secret lies.

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### THREE INTRODUCTIONS

*Of these three Introductions, originally prefixed to books now for several years out of print, the first and longest was written for the opening instalment (12 vols.) of the handsome "Shakespeare Head Edition" of Trollope's novels, which started publication under the auspices of Mr. Basil Blackwell in 1929. Mr. Blackwell planned to continue this enterprise with successive instalments, each containing a carefully selected group of novels, until the whole of Trollope's fiction had been included. But world economic conditions made continuance impossible, and only the Barsetshire novels, plus The Autobiography, were in fact published.*

*In an Editorial Note which preceded my Introduction I stated that I had so far as possible avoided trespassing on ground already covered by the Autobiography or by my own biography of Trollope, and added:*

*If what follows appear incomplete or lacking in biographical comment or characterization, it claims this excuse—that it is deliberately designed rather as a supplement to two existing books than as a condensation of them.*

*This statement applies equally to the second and third Introductions here reprinted. The comments on The Noble Jilt and London Tradesmen provide items of information about Trollope not, to my knowledge, otherwise available. They are offered, therefore, as pendants to what has elsewhere been written on the subject.*

#### (1) THE CHRONICLES OF BARSETSHIRE

##### I

IT WAS a good plan, when inaugurating this new edition of Trollope's novels, to include his Autobiography with the first group of stories. Most authors can be the better relished for

a knowledge of their lives and personalities; but while some have left material helpful to such knowledge, others have obscured themselves behind the mask of their works or even, going further, have disguised reality by imaginary self-portraiture. Anthony Trollope, appreciation of whose work depends to an exceptional degree on an understanding of the kind of man he was and of the kind of life he led, was fortunately a self-revealer of unusual candour. No autobiography left behind by a man of letters was more thoroughly and unaffectedly characteristic of its writer than was his.

Anyone, therefore, coming freshly to Trollope and wisely determining to start what may be a long friendship by reading the series of novels dealing with the places and personalities of the imaginary English county of Barsetshire, will do well to give the Autobiography precedence even over *The Warden*. In this way he will come to Barsetshire ready to see with Trollope's eyes, and on terms of some familiarity with his guide. In this way he will be able fully to appreciate the delicate and humorous sympathy which lay behind the gruff, unassuming, aggressively British exterior of a man who looked like a general practitioner in a Victorian country town, or maybe a squire-farmer of the 'sixties, but was in fact the most sensitive chronicler of everyday life in the history of English fiction.

## II

Trollope's Autobiography tells with moving simplicity the story of an unhappy childhood, of a sordid adolescence in a junior clerkship in the Post Office, of a desperate move to Ireland, and of the hopes of health, happiness and even success which Irish air and the rough fellowship of Irish sport brought for the first time into a life seemingly doomed to squalid mediocrity. There follows the long tale of Trollope's novel-writing—of his triumphs, his disappointments, his queer stubborn ideals and honest prejudices—until, in the final pages, he sums up what he considers to have been the amount of his achievement. This achievement presents

itself under two aspects—the one financial, the other self-appraising. He set out to earn his livelihood and that of his dependants; he set out to fulfil in his own person his own uncompromising conception of honour and of industry. In both he was successful; and when it is borne in mind that he started from worse than nothing (with indeed the handicap of a spirit crushed by sour unhappiness), it is not easy to recall any life-story better fitted to serve as a model for generations of recurrent youth, any doughtier record of an honourable ideal, steadfastly kept in view and patiently served.

When the *Autobiography* first appeared in 1883, it was naturally greeted as the autobiography of a man of letters. In other words the literary activity of the author was the basis of the book's appeal. But because there had never been a literary autobiography of its kind before, its unfamiliarity jarred readers into unfavourable judgment, not so much of the writer, as of his work. The early 'eighties, therefore, witnessed the curious phenomenon of a literary reputation actually damaged by the *non-literary* virtues of a dead author; and a new generation grew up with the idea that, because Trollope admitted to materialism in his view of the struggle for existence, because he was so unromantically commonsensical as to declare that hard work was as potent an element in a writer's success as in that of any other labourer, his books could not possibly be other than machine-made, nor his impulse to write other than mere pot-boiling.

All of this, if we consider it with detachment, was inevitable. Coming as a pendant to a literary life, Trollope's *Autobiography* could not have failed to depreciate his work. But suppose it had been possible for the book to be read, not as the life-story of a novelist, but as a record of self-help in the course of which the hero had also written books? What then? Surely even the 'eighties would have recognized the work as a manual of conduct both inspiring and admirable? Surely even the 'eighties would with eager curiosity have turned from this crowded calendar of a staunch and strenuous life, to see what manner of books this very unbookish Englishman could have written?

Unfortunately they had no opportunity to do either of these things; and Trollope's genius suffered eclipse (save in the hearts of a few faithful and enlightened folk) for the best part of half a century. Now comes the chance for the Autobiography to take its true place. Instead of the last item in the long procession of his books, it is the first.

### III

With the opening sentence of *The Warden* the reader is over the boundary into the county of Barset; is in Barchester, the county's capital and cathedral city; is face to face with the Rev. Septimus Harding, Warden of Hiram's Hospital, the central figure of the tale which bears his name and the only character who survives throughout the Barset Saga. Thus suddenly does it all happen. And because Trollope had no mind, when he wrote *The Warden*, to follow it with a series of books about the same district and society, it is only possible to attribute the forthrightness of this opening paragraph to an instinct for dramatic construction inherent in the still unpractised novelist. Of this instinct for construction more is said below; but it is worth observing its early appearance in an otherwise clumsy novel, for it remained (despite his own denial of possessing it) one of Trollope's great qualities as a storyteller—a quality which never shows itself without giving the reader a tiny shock of surprise, such as is caused by the sight of the huge hands of some slow-moving sailor, tying with deft rapidity a delicate and complex knot.

The very first words, then, of *The Warden* introduce a county, a city and an important member of a social group, all of which were destined by gradual elaboration to grow into a permanent though imaginary landscape of English fiction. Thus to create a countryside and to people it with a society of his own invention is perhaps the largest achievement within a storyteller's reach, and Trollope's claim to a place among major novelists rests—not wholly but most obviously—upon his having triumphantly contrived it.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his well-known criticism, defined in a general way this essential element in Trollope's genius. The effect of the novels was, he said, "as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business and not suspecting that they were being made a show of". The late Sir Hugh Walpole,<sup>1</sup> applying the general to the particular, declared that "in the Barsetshire series of novels Trollope achieved an especial success allowed to very few novelists in any country at any time—he created a world". In other words, the giant was not only showman but creator too; for it was his own invented earth out of which he hewed a lump, they were men and women of his own creation who, under the glass case and seemingly of their own choosing, went to and fro.

A moment's reflection will show how different, alike in quality and stature, is such out-and-out creation from the more frequent novelist-method of writing around and about either a definite district or a specific dynasty. Regionalism in fiction and the building up, in a series of novels, of the history of a single family (which is in effect regionalism in terms of heredity), are phenomena familiar to students of literature and particularly of modern literature. Trollope, however, not only contrived to unite the two continuities of staging and character; he went further, and actually evolved both background and personalities from his own inventive genius.

Barsetshire was not a real county, so that its features could not be delineated by any effort of observation and memory. At the same time, in the drawing of his characters he had not the assistance of even an imagined heredity, for the bond between them is not one of family, but rather the subtler bond of caste and manner characteristic of the sort of persons who would naturally inhabit the sort of towns and villages which he had conjured into being. Trollope's imaginative attainment was therefore twofold. He used his powers of observation (and more important still his amazing sense of social likelihood) to construct an entire countryside, the hier-

<sup>1</sup> In *Anthony Trollope* (English Men of Letters Series) 1928.

archy of which from feudal lord to street-sweeper, reflected so accurately the truth of his day, that one can hardly believe his novels are not galleries of portraits, with landscape backgrounds copied from reality. And only then—having got thus far, having conjured his society and its setting—could he start writing his stories, relying on his own instinctive sympathy with the normal psychology of his kind to tell him how, in the endlessly varied circumstances of their lives, each one of these individuals would behave.

An achievement of this magnitude stands to the credit of few enough novelists of any race. Walpole claims it for Thomas Hardy, for Balzac, for Thackeray, for Jane Austen.<sup>1</sup> But do all of these actually pass the Trollope test? I think not. Thackeray added no shire or march to the geography of England; Jane Austen's social pictures, though they have much in common with those of Trollope, stand in relation to them somewhat as a series of exquisite "stills" would stand in relation to the great film from which they had been photographed. Jane Austen's detail stands out more sharply and deftly than Trollope's, her composition in this group or that is more perfect in balance than any one composition discernible during the slow evolution of the drama of Barsetshire. But although, if you set all of Jane Austen's novels together, you have a wall of faultless cabinet-pictures, each perfect of its kind, each in its delicately-proportioned frame, the Barset stories, similarly ranged one beside the other, blend into an immense living fresco, which gives so vivid an illusion of reality that it might seem as though the wall itself had melted into air, allowing the spectator to gaze directly at the slow-moving comedy of life itself.

Hardy and Balzac, then, remain to share with Trollope the rank of world-creating novelists. High company indeed; and, lest the partnership of Trollope with such great ones seem shameless exaggeration of his literary worth, it must forthwith

<sup>1</sup> Also for Zola, though this is surely a slip of the pen, Zola's novel-series is an outstanding example of a hereditary as opposed to a regional sequence. The continuity of the Rougon-Macquart novels is a continuity of clan; their settings are not only very various but are all realistic—that is to say actual transcriptions of real towns and districts named by their right names.



be emphasized that only in so far as the three of them actually created at once their landscape and their figures, is any parallel either intended or possible.

As soon as one proceeds beyond the fact of creation to an assessment of the thing created, the limitations of Trollope are immediately manifest; and since no one was more aware of these limitations or less ashamed of them than Trollope himself, their avowal becomes a duty on the critic of his work, and their very existence almost a feature of its excellence.

Trollope was a perfect product alike of his age and of his country. Such a man could have sprung from no race but the English, could have lived in no epoch but the mid-Victorian. I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere<sup>1</sup> how utterly he was a part of his time, how interwoven with the very fibres of his being were the ideals and reserves of the class and era to which he belonged. The point of present significance is that Trollope's excellence as a delineator of character and custom is a specialist excellence. Whereas all of Balzac and much of Hardy can claim to be an interpretation of human nature as a perpetual and universal thing, Trollope's interpretative achievement *and ambition* are limited to certain classes of English society at one definite period of its history. If, therefore, no more is expected of him than he set out to perform, little enough of his self-imposed task will be found to have remained undone.

#### IV

Trollope created Barsetshire. This is no figure of speech but literal fact. He says in the Autobiography:

As I wrote *Framley Parsonage* I became more closely than ever acquainted with the new shire which I had added to the English counties. I had it all in my mind—its roads and railroads, its towns and parishes, its members of Parliament and the different hunts which rode over it. I knew all the great lords and their castles, the squires and their

<sup>1</sup> *Trollope: A Commentary*, 1927.

parks, the rectors and their churches. . . . There has been no name given to a fictitious site which does not represent to me a spot of which I know all the accessories as though I have lived and wandered there.

This passage, though not actually ambiguous, does give a hint of encouragement to amateurs of the *roman à clé*; and in consequence much ingenuity has been misspent in attempts to identify the towns and country houses of Barsestshire with real towns and houses. It may be taken as certain that, beyond a very elementary stage, such identification is impossible; for the reason that Trollope, although of course he built up his imaginary scenes from the crowded memories of his own actual experience, deliberately mixed the ingredients so as to produce a landscape which should give the illusion of reality but not depend for that illusion on a realistic transcription of existing fact. There is no need to recapitulate here the evidence on which the process of identification can be carried further. We know that the first impulse to the writing of *The Warden* was not an impulse to create a cathedral city but to construct a novel round a recently debated case concerning the administration (some said maladministration) of an almshouse endowment. This real case concerned the hospital of St. Cross of Winchester. The basic plot of the novel sprang therefore from a building in Winchester, but the *idea* of the plot came to Trollope when he was in Salisbury. When he came to surround his cathedral city with villages, country houses and landscape generally, he composed this hinterland from a dozen areas of his own recent experience, with the result that Barsestshire is a blend of Dorset, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, over every portion of each of which he is known to have travelled.

To attempt greater precision would be waste of time; but it is worth putting on record that the description of Archdeacon Grantly's church at "Plumstead Episcopi" given in Chapter xii of *The Warden* tallies in every particular with the construction of the parish church of Huish Episcopi in Somerset. This fact, combined with the similarity of name between

the real and fictional villages, gives solid ground for the theory that Trollope wrote indeed from personal experience, but from experience selected and carefully mixed.

## V

So much for Bassetshire. Now for the folk who people it:

The predominant element in the social panorama of the county is the clerical one. Barchester the capital city is a cathedral city, and overwhelmingly the most important section of that city's population centres on the cathedral. The country districts are equally dominated by the interests and ambitions of the church. The palace of the bishop; the close with its private dwelling-houses; the subsidiary churches of the town; the neighbouring parishes with their rectories, vicarages and curacies—these form the pattern of Bassetshire as displayed to public view, these (to change the metaphor) are the nerve-centres of the county's life, to whose health or sickness the whole social body must inevitably respond.

Trollope's preoccupation with the church as a social influence in English country life, and his simultaneous indifference to its spiritual significance, are highly evidential, on the one hand of his unerring sense of social fact, and on the other of his personal mentality. A French critic, writing of *The Warden* and of *Barchester Towers* at the time of their first appearance,<sup>1</sup> praised them particularly for the sense they show of the unique position of the Anglican clergy in national life, which position is, as he skilfully demonstrated, as typical an outcome of Englishness as could be imagined. The English, he argues, have from the time of their revolution always shown a respect and liking for institutions *per se*. Ready enough to attack individuals (kings, politicians, bishops) they have seldom involved in these attacks the institutions (the monarchy, the constitution, the church) whose representatives they scarify. The treatment accorded by Trollope to the clergy in the Basset novels proves that this tendency was as strong in mid-Victorian England as at any other time. And

<sup>1</sup> Emile Montégut, *Ecrivains Modernes de l'Angleterre*, 3rd series, 1855 and 1858.

Montégut, with the amused bewilderment common to logical French minds viewing the strange anomalies of English life, concludes by declaring a little ruefully that long before criticism of king or cleric had in France reached the extreme which it has easily but harmlessly attained in England, those institutions themselves had fallen victim to the subversiveness of national disgust.

No one will dispute this critic's description of Trollope's attitude toward the clerical society of Barsetshire. Few enough of his clerics or of their dependants are other than fallible—some are a good deal worse than that—and Trollope, with characteristically genial cynicism, devotes a large part of the six Barsetshire novels to an exposure of their frailties. And yet never once is there any challenge to the existence of the church as an institution, and it would be impossible to imagine a Trollopiian England of any kind in which a clerical caste did not play a vital part.

It has already been hinted (and the fact becomes immediately obvious to every new-comer to Barsetshire) that Trollope's clergy are men with a very definite lay existence but (for all that we are told of it) next to nothing in the way of spiritual absorption. Neither Mr. Harding nor Mr. Crawley—the one the only saintly character in the whole reverend portrait gallery, the other a righteous ascetic to whom faith must inevitably have been his inspiration and support—are never, when we see them, occupied with the directly religious activities of their office. Certainly Mr. Harding, in his daily life and in his bearing toward his fellow men, follows with staunch humility the teachings of his Master. Certainly Mr. Crawley, by self-forgetfulness and sense of duty, fulfils his own gloomy conception of the true follower of Christ. But it is hardly too much to say that if Trollope, for the sake of play of character, had required men of this spiritual calibre, both Mr. Harding and Mr. Crawley could have been laymen and carried the same psychological weight. It is purely from the social aspect that their being in orders is important—so important, indeed, that, were they otherwise, the whole structure of the Barset novels would fall apart.

The definitely non-religious character even of Trollope's most admirable ministers of religion has reacted variously and curiously on different types of reader. Some, who would on other counts have been naturally inclined to savour his books, have been distressed or displeased. Others, to whom the Anglican church and its officers are themselves objects of dislike, have been balked of appreciation by the very predominance of clergy in the stories. Others again (the Catholics) have leapt joyfully on Trollope's unspiritual parsons as equivalent to a rejection by a confessed Anglican of the claim of Anglicanism to be a religion at all.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect therefore (as in others both during his lifetime and after it) Trollope, without quite knowing it, missed several boats. And to the three above-mentioned reactions to his conception of the clergy there has recently been added a fourth and a typically twentieth-century one. This view, expressed outright by Walpole and certainly felt by many other present-day intellectuals, is to the effect that Trollope would have been a greater artist, had he been conscious—not of the religious beliefs of his clergy, but of the Cathedral of Barchester “as in itself, because of its past history, its great beauty, its own spiritual significance, a separate and dramatic personality”.

This observation gives expression to a yearning very characteristic of an age like the present, which can boast of having lost faith in dogma but shrinks from declaring that it has lost faith in Faith. In the place of an at present *démodé* institutionalism, many serious-minded persons like to cherish a vaguely pantheistic philosophy, to invest material things with mystical qualities more or less implicit in their history or their beauty. But what can satisfy one epoch may be inconceivable in another; and of such indirect indulgence of the religious emotion as is implied by Walpole's words both Trollope and his time were frankly incapable.

The Anglican 'sixties admitted no alternative to obedient

<sup>1</sup> This interesting point of view is forcibly expressed in a long critical article on several of Trollope's novels published in *The Dublin Review* for October, 1872. One hesitates to think with what indignation and amazement Trollope must have greeted this ingenious outbreak of Catholic propaganda.

belief save disbelief; and with the latter were included the several shades of indifference, doubt or bewilderment which lie between the outright acceptance and rejection of a creed. Inevitably, therefore, those persons insufficiently interested either for enthusiasm or hostility, evolved for themselves a sort of orthodox disguise, which not only served for respectability but satisfied their very moderate convictions. They maintained simply and sincerely enough the outward forms of worship, strove to achieve in daily life a certain standard of honourable behaviour, but (in the vernacular) "left the formulas to parsons and to women". Of such was Trollope. He wore a silk hat on Sundays, rented no doubt so many sittings in a pew of Waltham church, but interpreted his own share of Christian duty to be the observance of a definite code of everyday morality—upright, on certain points uncompromising, essentially practical and the reverse of high falutin. Further, it may be hazarded that his natural modesty, combined with his stubborn belief in every workman having his own job and sticking to it, helped to persuade him that the technical complexities of religious observance were the business of the clergy and not of the laity; that for the latter to interfere with them would be at once presumption and waste of efficiency; and finally that for an ordinary downright Englishman like himself to affect devotional phrasing or ecstasy, or in any way to trespass on the speciality of a trained body of his fellow men, would be ostentatious and absurd.

If his work seems the natural outcome of such an attitude of mind, equally naturally is it free from the pseudo-poetical rhetoric of a Huysmans or the pantheism of a Hardy. To expect him to have enthroned the spirit of a cathedral as super-protagonist in a novel of contemporary manners is not only to expect the impossible, but amounts to a rejection of the essential qualities of the books as they are. A mystical Anthony Trollope would not have been *our* Trollope, nor would his novels have in the least resembled those which *our* Trollope wrote.

In summary Trollope's clergymen are members of society and not interpreters of spiritual mysteries, because their creator

was interested in (and felt himself qualified to discuss) society, but was partly shy, partly indifferent in the face of mystery. That this should have been so was directly due to the influence on the novelist of his mother.

Frances Trollope's attitude toward contemplative things in general and, in particular, toward the role of the clergy in English life was just what might have been expected in a woman of her character and experience.

As to the former, it was an attitude of brisk and unrepentant aloofness. She was not herself a contemplative person, and whatsoever she may have possessed of potential reflectiveness was thwarted early and for always by the harsh circumstances of her life. Working for the present, she came to live in the present; at war with material misfortune, she forged weapons suited to her dilemma and fought the world with worldliness.

As to the latter—the place and importance in contemporary England of the Anglican church and its ministers—Frances Trollope, writing for the genteel, assumed a mask of gentility. Occasionally she gave rein to personal prejudice and pillioned in a novel the evangelical type of cleric whom she particularly disliked. More frequently, however—and somewhat cynically—she wrote with a conventional smugness designed to please her public. Here is a characteristic passage from her book *Paris and the Parisians*, which was first published in 1835. She is speaking of the far greater tolerance shown by French than English society toward those who have transgressed against convention, and observes:

One reason why there is less exclusiveness and severity of selection in forming a circle here [i.e. in Paris] is that there are no individuals, or rather no class of individuals, in the wide circle which constitutes the society of Paris, who could step forward with propriety and say "This may not be". With us, happily, the case is different. The clergy of England, their matronly wives and highly educated daughters, form a distinct caste to which there is nothing that answers in the whole range of continental Europe.

While such men as these mingle freely in society, as they

do constantly in England and bring with them the females who form their families, there is little danger that notorious vice should choose to obtrude itself.

Anthony read these words when he was twenty years old. Thus early he became aware of the singular social influence of the English clergy, and of the fact that in England alone were they so bound up with the governing class of lay society as to be able to affect that society's tone. Fifteen years later (and about a year before he himself began the writing of *The Warden*) he enjoyed the satirical picture of the social life of the Cathedral Close of "Westhampton" in his mother's novel *Petticoat Government*. The provocation was direct and ample. He had only to substitute his own brand of kindly cynicism for the lip-service to respectability which Frances Trollope quite cheerfully paid, and he was already launched on precisely the type of amused investigation in which he delighted, and from the strictly social standpoint which alone intrigued him.

## VI

Those who are prepared to accept Trollope's clergy for the purely social figures which he intended them to be, will find in them the clearest illustration available of one of his most remarkable talents—the power to differentiate between individuals of a generic type. The late Lord Bryce declared: "In Trollope's clerical portrait gallery no two faces are exactly alike, and yet all are such people as one might see any day in the pulpit"; and the words have a significance beyond their literal application. Just as Trollope portrays Mr. Harding, Mr. Crawley, the autocratic self-reliant ambitious Archdeacon Grantly, the indolent and self-indulgent Dr. Stanhope, the pitiful Bishop Proudie, the revolting Slope, the impressive but slightly pliable Arabin—making each one an individuality and yet all unmistakable members of a single caste, so can he convey the similarities and differences of other groups of his



characters. His girls have the type-qualities of English young ladies; they are regular products of the sort of education and the sort of home from which such young ladies had emerged. But no one can confuse Lucy Robarts and Mary Thorne; no one can mistake Lily Dale for Grace Crawley. His lawyers, his officials, even his peers, are similarly alike but different.

There can be no doubt that this genius for combining individual portraiture with the delineation of types and ways of life universally familiar, did more than anything else to endear him to the readers of his day. As the Barchester novels one by one appeared, they were followed with breathless interest by thousands of precisely the sort of people with whom the stories themselves were concerned. How thoroughly their readers identified themselves with the characters in the books, how intimately they knew every detail of the fictional lives which Trollope displayed for their amusement, is divertingly shown by the following letter, which he received from a "lady reader" during the serialization in the Cornhill Magazine of *The Small House at Allington*:

East Grinstead,  
February 9th 1864.

SIR,

I hope you will not consider that I am taking a great liberty if I venture to point out to you what has struck all lady readers of your delightful story *The Small House at Allington* as a mistake.

In one of the earlier numbers of that story—the first, I think—you mention some brown silk dresses given by the Squire to his nieces which were a source of great trouble to them, as being deficient in quantity. Now Mrs. Dale could not have been the good manager she is represented, and yet be ignorant of a very simple way of remedying the misfortune, viz. by sending a pattern by post to town, and procuring the additional quantity requisite. We have no reason to suppose it was a figured silk so that she could have had no difficulty in matching it; even if she could not procure the exact shade she might have changed the dresses, the Squire would never have been the wiser.

I hope you will excuse my having pointed out this slight mistake, but I take an interest in Mrs. Dale and think it not fair that she should be represented as being more ignorant than I am sure she was. In a future edition, she should surely be cleared from such an imputation, either by the way I have mentioned or by saying that the silk was of a somewhat peculiar and old-fashioned pattern.

Whilst I am writing will you excuse my saying how much Dr. Neale and myself hope that you will give Archdeacon Grantly a bishopric before you end; it is too hard that he should have been disappointed twice, poor man! and after some recent appointments made by the Gods there would be nothing surprising in his receiving a so well-merited reward even from their hands.

[signed]

Trollope must have enjoyed this letter. The final paragraph is particularly expressive of its writer's kind. One can almost see her, seated at the walnut escritoire, while Dr. Neale from his armchair by the fire looks over the top of his paper, and from its columns provides yet another example of recent frivolity in ecclesiastical appointments.

Readers of the day could therefore catch him out on feminine fashions and use Archdeacon Grantly as a stick with which to beat a Government. But they did not, so far as one knows, take exception to what is perhaps the only serious fault of characterization in the whole series of Barchester novels, and one which concerns this same important cleric.

It is on record that a publisher's reader found in the original version of *The Warden* and in *Barchester Towers* things intolerable to a sense of true refinement, and that the author altered them. Nevertheless, an incident was passed over in the earlier of the two books, which, to modern taste at any rate, is not only vulgar but out of character—the surreptitious reading by the Archdeacon of the works of Rabelais. Dr. Grantly, with all his faults, was surely beyond the stage of this very ordinary surreptitiousness? He was a mature and successful man, to whom (if he were indeed an amateur of the curious)

Rabelais would be very small beer and (if he were a student of French literature) the most permissible of reading. Admittedly Trollope had not at this early stage "thought out" the Archdeacon all the way; but he had realized a large part of him, and it is surprising to find an author, whose most perfect quality is his sense of values in characterization, introducing a clumsy improbability of this kind and—into the bargain—introducing it with a perceptible snigger.

To recognize this one lapse of taste in a series of novels which by their very nature are of the kind most liable to such lapses, is really to pay Trollope a special if indirect compliment. It is not the least remarkable of his achievements that in the course of ceaseless novel-writing—and always on themes in themselves undistinguished by beauty or heroism—he should so persistently have avoided the exaggerations, the over-emphases, the little errors of judgment of which far cleverer men than he are often guilty in the course of their everyday existence. Probably the very fact that he was not in the ordinary sense a "clever" man accounts at once for his preoccupation with normal things and for his sureness of touch in handling them. His was neither a rebellious nor a wayward mind. He found the regulation life of his day and his class enough of a problem and a pleasure to keep attention engaged and aspiration satisfied. Consequently, when he settled to put that life into a novel, he projected into the imagined but familiar record all of his own absorbed interest in the tiny crises which one after another confront men and women during the daily round, which finally blend together into a retrospect of quietly normal things.

The criticism most frequently made of Trollope as a novelist is that his themes and his technique are alike commonplace. As to the first, the charge is surely no charge at all but rather an irrelevance. One does not blame a gas-bracket for burning gas; it does not pretend to do anything else. Similarly, though some may prefer themes loftier than Trollope's, they express no general truth but merely their own fancy when they declare him dull and trivial. To him the daily round, the little comedies and calamities of courtship and domesticity,

the companionship and thrill of the hunting field, the gulfs which separate one class from another, the ties of sympathy which yet can bind utterly different personalities together, were neither dull nor trivial. They were endlessly various, fascinating, dramatic. He chose his own themes, and in so doing exercised the right of any artist. If others did not like those themes he was content for them to turn away.

The criticism of his technique (in which are included style and construction) as bleak and mechanical is, however, more to the point and therefore more arguable. The style in which the best of Trollope's work is written, flat and ordinary as it may at first sight appear, possesses in fact to a supreme degree the art which conceals art. Only those who have tried know how difficult it is for a writer to obliterate his personality from the style in which he writes, and at the same time to preserve what he regards as the necessary forcefulness. It is easier to write "beautifully" than, while subordinating style to theme, to write expressively. And Trollope, who mastered expression, was also quite capable of fine writing, although he rarely practised it. Here is a sentence from one of his non-fiction works: "Sallust's work is excellent mosaic, in which the accurate thinking is wonderful; but the prose of Cicero is like a group of Titian's, with the beautiful blue mountains in the background." On such a theme he permitted himself a licence which he would have considered unfitting in a novelist of manners; and for fiction he trained himself—though painfully—to use English as the very obedient servant of his narrative but as the master of himself. Unluckily, because the more complete the achievement the more unobtrusive did it become, his reputation suffered for his skill. Walter Herries Pollock made this point well in *Harper's Magazine* in May 1883:

The romance of Mr. Crawley in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* is of a special kind—of the kind that a man of such invention and observation as Mr. Trollope had could detect in the most everyday surroundings and could bring out in what seemed the most everyday manner. I say

"seemed", because I think that the ease with which he wrote, the uniform swing or beat of style which he always adopted, were not unapt to prevent the art of his method and the genius which underlay that art from being perceived. It is exceptionally easy to read any of his best known novels . . . and people who read them swiftly, easily forgot that art such as this must have been acquired with infinite pains and meant more than the actual writing down of words.

In truth, of course, Trollope slaved to perfect the readability of his prose. Anyone who sits down to read these Barsestshire novels from start to finish will be conscious, as he reads, of the increasing ease with which the language expresses what the author meant. He will observe that it acquires a sort of sub-melody of its own, as though the natural harmony of the life so smoothly and truthfully described reacted on the sentences as they formed themselves in Trollope's mind.

But if his style were the outcome of deliberate labour, his constructive ability was a talent over which he had no control. It has already been said that he was not conscious of possessing such ability; but the novels are full of it—as indeed they must be, if their crowd of characters are to stand out as clearly in the reader's mind as they surely do. The swift comprehensiveness of the first paragraph of *The Warden* has been noted above, and Walpole shrewdly draws attention to a similar rapid artistry in the opening chapter of the Autobiography, where "it shows the novelist's art in Trollope that he should at once present us with that [Orley] farm—a building as tragic and forboding as any curse in Greek tragedy".

A third good example of Trollope's "stage sense"—the instinct for setting a scene, for contriving entrances and exits—is provided very early in *Doctor Thorne*. The heroine has to be brought on to the stage—not heralded by trumpetings, for she is not that kind of heroine, but with a demure self-effacement suited to her nature. Wherefore her first introduction to the reader is deliberately, dramatically casual.

Trollope intended her to slip into his story modestly but unmistakably, and so he brilliantly contrives. At the very end of the description of the festivities at Greshamsbury, when Frank Gresham comes of age, he gives a rapid survey of the "visitors of the gentle sort" who mingled with the squire's tenants. This survey (and with it a chapter) thus concludes:

Then there were the Bakers and the Batesons and the Jacksons, who all lived near and returned home at night; there was the Reverend Caleb Oriel, the High Church rector, with his beautiful sister, Patience Oriel; there was Mr. Yates Umbleby, the attorney and agent; and there were Doctor Thorne and the doctor's modest, quiet-looking little niece, Miss Mary.

Never had fictional character an entrance more faultlessly adjudged. Just as she is the last but, subtly, the most noticeable figure in this catalogue, so throughout the story which bears her uncle's name, Mary Thorne rarely holds the stage, yet dominates its every happening.

## VII

So to the final (perhaps the crowning) tribute to Trollope the novelist. He can tell a story—and tell it so well as to take the reader right out of himself, and for a while hold him in an imaginary world, absorbed in the joys, anxieties or wanderings of imaginary people. The fact that he wrote of an England of eighty years ago might be expected so to influence his work that it would affect the modern reader as does a piece of old-fashioned bric-à-brac—as, that is to say, something quaint and charming, but definitely of a vanished day. That nothing of the sort should happen is proof of Trollope's genius, for it shows that his people are human beings and not mere oddities with whisker and crinoline. Not many story-tellers of any age have so divined the essential "humanness" of their fellows, have so clearly dis-

tinguished period-mannerism from fundamental impulse, that their works can be read by posterity and relished as offering recognizable portraits of human beings—of just such human beings as are known to the reader whatsoever his date and clime.

Such a story-teller is Trollope. Topical, in so far as he wrote of the life of the classes of society he really knew; dateless, because he had an instinctive understanding of fundamental human nature, he succeeded in describing and peopling an imaginary bit of England. To read him is to walk the streets of his towns, the lanes of his countryside; to be introduced to real ministers of religion, real squires, real publicans, real dowagers and real girls, all of whom are just such folk as we know already, who are as likely as our neighbours to become either friends or enemies.

And in no series of his novels is Trollope's amazing power of normal characterization and of creating an illusion of everyday life more evident than in that centring round the Cathedral city of Barchester. They are—each and all—first-rate reading novels; nor will anyone who makes the acquaintance of old Mr. Harding, of Archdeacon Grantly and of Eleanor Bold in *The Warden* be denied their further acquaintance in *Barchester Towers*, and the enlargement of his circle by an introduction to Bishop and Mrs. Proudie, to Mr. Slope, to the Stanhope family, and so on to the end.

*Doctor Thorne* exploits—in place of the persons working in and out about the cathedral—the county families with their great landed properties and their dependants, who form the eminent social hinterland to the city of Barchester. It also, in the person of Mary Thorne, introduces the first Trollopian heroine of the purest water, and for this reason alone ranks among the most significant works of an author whose power of portraying girlhood has never been excelled in the history of English fiction.

*Framley Parsonage* continues the histories of characters from the earlier books—the Grantlys, the Greshams, Miss Dunstable, Mrs. Proudie and others. But its chief parts are played by new actors (such being Trollope's practice in all novels which

have any pretence to being in series), notably the Lady Lufton of Framley Court, Lucy Robarts, another charming heroine, and the seeming-smart crowd of raffish second-raters who centre round Mr. Sowerby of Chaldicotes. Note that among the new-comers to the cast is the Reverend Josiah Crawley of Hoggstock, who is destined to dominate a later and a greater novel in the Barsetshire series.

*The Small House at Allington* presents a different rural area and, once again, different "principals". The Dale family and Johnny Eames are new; while the stingy scheming aristocratic gang of Courcys, though important in *Doctor Thorne*, become in *The Small House at Allington* one of the main props of the story.

The last of the Barchester series—the very title-page says farewell—is in the opinion of many good judges the finest novel of them all. *The Last Chronicle of Barset* is very long, in places very grim, in others full of that unaffected tenderness which Trollope—simple and candid as he was—could always achieve without mawkishness or exaggeration. Also, quite apart from the drama of Mr. Crawley, the love story of his daughter Grace and the half-dozen sub-plots which go to build the impressive whole, lovers of Trollope must do honour to *The Last Chronicle of Barset* because its pages mark the grave of Mrs. Proudie, and because from it Lily Dale—twin queen with Mary Thorne of the realm of Barset girls—passes out of the knowledge of man, vowed (or so she would have us believe) to eternal spinsterhood.

It is not difficult to understand that readers all over the world should have mourned the avowed termination of the Barset saga. Even so late as 1881—little more than a year before his death—Trollope received from an eminent American an urgent plea for just one more tale of Barsetshire, for one further glimpse of the old friends who had waited unchronicled for fifteen years. But he was tired, and pleaded age in a letter which has the melancholy of exhausted vigour.

The weariness was prophetic of the end. No man can work as Trollope worked and linger to great old age. In December 1882, in his sixty-eighth year, he died in London;



and of the many tributes published after his death none was more quietly apt than an anonymous little poem, printed in a paper called *The St. James's Budget*.

Ah, yes, the master's touch is light  
As ever of old; but the well known note  
Rings sadly now, for I read to-night  
The words that a dead man wrote.

The fireside hours that fled fast  
For a world that read of its works and ways  
This Time has taken, and left this last  
Poor luxury of praise.

From weary weighing of creed with creed,  
From clash eternal of class and clan,  
The jaded sciolist turned to read  
A tale of his fellow man.

From them that compass heaven and earth  
To spin us a riddle we turned away  
To the love, and the liking, and the mirth  
That are not of a day.

And so for the sake of that sunny side  
And because sobriety has its charm,  
We say farewell, not quite dry-eyed,  
To the author of "Orley Farm".

(ii) THE NOBLE JILT: A PLAY

TO ADMIRERS and students of Anthony Trollope, the interest of this play, printed in 1923 from the original manuscript, is out of all proportion to its artistic qualities.

So far as is known, Trollope wrote only two plays during the prolific five and thirty years of his life of authorship. Dramatic form was uncomfortable to him. It limited his elbow-room and forbade him the subtle accumulation of detail

which was his genius. He liked a large canvas and a crowded one. Unrivalled as a manipulator of interdependent groups and individuals, he loved to sustain the interest and vitality of half a dozen societies, weaving them into one absorbing narrative. The more one reads his novels, the more one marvels at the skill with which he takes the reader from one set of characters to another, at the knowledge of human nature that enabled him to present so many personalities from so many walks of life, at the technique that could keep each individual distinct and at the same time each group of individuals generically alike.

But for such a technique to have free play, for his skill and for his perception to find scope for exercise, Trollope required space and liberty. His was no tabloid brilliance; he dealt in panorama, not in miniature. The limitations of dramatic form cramped him intolerably. Those paragraphs of analysis which in his novels make so convincing and so clear the motives of his characters; the repetitions of phrase; the quiet succession of hints by which in narrative he could reveal the slow developments of impulse, have no place in drama. Trollope as playwright was but a quarter Trollope; and he was too level-headed a judge of his own capacities to waste labour and precious days over work for which he was unsuited.

Nevertheless, with that sturdy humour which was so characteristic of him, he liked to refer to his attempts at playwriting, to assert their qualities, to record their failure, to chuckle at his own unrealized ambitions. And of the two recorded dramas which he brought to completion, *The Noble Jilt* was the nearer to his heart. He refers to it in his Autobiography; he introduces it deliberately and by name into one of his later novels. We may, therefore, be satisfied that, however clearly he realized its faults, he had no desire to disown it. Trollope's works were to him like his friends. He would laugh at them, but he would never deny them.

That he should have cherished the memory of this play throughout his life may be particularly as well as generally explained.

In the first place, it was written very early in his career of authorship. His first novel—*The Macdermots of Ballycloran*—was published in 1847; his second in 1848; his third in 1850. In that year also *The Noble Jilt* was written. Trollope was over thirty before his name appeared on any title-page; he was, therefore, no stripling when he composed this play. But authors have tenderness for their early productions even though well aware of their shortcomings, and the author of *The Noble Jilt* was no exception.

A second reason for the persistence of the play in its creator's memory is at the same time a large element in its interest for later generations. *The Noble Jilt* is the germ of one of his best-known novels—the germ of *Can You Forgive Her?*

Finally (and though evidence be lacking of the truth of this contention, it is not an unreasonable one) we may hazard that, despite his assertive commonsense and his deliberate abstention from the literary humbug of his age, Trollope had a sneaking fondness for historical romance. The heyday of the costume novel was over by the middle of the century. Ainsworth, it is true, persisted to the end, but found, poor man, that he was working an exhausted vein. His best books, as also those of Bulwer in the same genre, were all published by 1850. Fashion had changed. The popular novels of the mid-Victorian era were novels of contemporary manners or, in the current jargon, "Stories of the Day". Of such fictions Trollope himself became the most assiduous and most applauded purveyor. But even as Wilkie Collins made his bow with a story of the fall of Rome, even as Reade made preliminary excursions into powder and patch romance or into mediaevalism, so had Trollope his year of historical experiment.

That year was 1850, and, as has been said, it produced not only *The Noble Jilt*, but also the author's third fiction and only costume novel—a queer, unreadable lump of anti-revolutionary propaganda called *La Vendée*. Evidently Trollope was at that time passing through a definite phase of mental growth. He had written two stories about Ireland—stories which, for all their inexperience and their tracts of tedium, have much of

the quality of his maturer work. Then, suddenly and within a year, he produced a novel and a play, both set in the same period of history, both possessed of a definite political bias. The explanation may doubtless be found in the events of '48, when revolutionary upheavals threatened to involve Great Britain in the convulsions of the continent. He wrote from Ireland to his mother in the spring of that year, giving his opinion of the chances of trouble in his own corner of the British Isles and in England itself. His mind, like those of most other men, was intent on the dangers of the time. Doubtless, like many others, he read in his anxiety memoirs of past periods of unrest and particularly of the era of revolutionary France; doubtless, like not a few, he wished to add his voice to those of other sound conservatives and to cry out against the barbarity, which to them was the inevitable accompaniment of republican disquiet. Of his two utterances, *La Vendée*, because it expressed only a reaction from disorder and has neither sense of character nor gleam of humour to relieve its doctrinizing, may be neglected and forgotten; but *The Noble Jilt* should be remembered, for it had an idea behind its propaganda, and a situation and personalities which could, many years later, be revived and glorified. *La Vendée* is history, with a faint fictional disguise plastered along its front; *The Noble Jilt* is fiction (and real Trollope fiction), obscured but not extinguished by an arbitrary historical setting and by conventional and none too accurate blank verse.

*The Noble Jilt*, as has been said, was written after the completion of *La Vendée*. The period between its retirement into a locked drawer of Trollope's desk and the re-emergence of its leading characters on the more glorious stage of *Can You Forgive Her?* was, therefore, almost exactly thirteen years. This is a long time in any writer's life; it was markedly long in the life of an author as prolific as Trollope. Between *La Vendée* and the first public appearance of Alice Vavasor, he published ten novels,<sup>1</sup> two volumes of short stories<sup>2</sup> and two

<sup>1</sup> *The Warden*, *Barchester Towers*, *The Three Clerks*, *Doctor Thorne*, *The Bertrams*, *Castle Richmond*, *Framley Parsonage*, *Orley Farm*, *Rachel Ray* and *The Small House at Allington*.

<sup>2</sup> *Tales of All Countries*, 1st and 2nd Series.

books of travel.<sup>1</sup> His readers (who now numbered hundreds of thousands) were familiar with the cathedral and personalities of Barchester, with Mr. Chaffanbrass, with Mary Thorne and Martha Dunstable, with Miss Todd and Lady Lufton, with Lily Dale and Lady Alexandra de Courcy and the wretched Crosbie. The clamour grew for more Trollope and for more Trollope still. In response, he drew a discarded drama from his desk, jettisoned costume and historical allusion, added a few sub-plots from his illimitable store, and launched a new full-length novel which, in the matter of basic plot and in the personality of its chief protagonists, was *The Noble Jilt*.

The following table of characters shows the closeness of the parallel between the play and the novel:

Characters of <i>The Noble Jilt</i>		Characters of <i>Can You Forgive Her?</i>
Margaret de Wynter		becomes Alice Vavasor
de Wynter (her father)	„	John Vavasor (Alice's father).
Madame Brudo (her aunt, widow of a rich iron-monger)	„	Mrs. Greenow (Alice's aunt; widow of a rich Lancashire manufacturer)
Count Upsel of Lindenbrock (Margaret's betrothed)	„	John Grey of Nethercoats (Alice's fiancé).
Steinmark (Margaret's old lover and a republican)	„	George Vavasor (Alice's cousin and former lover; an extreme radical).
Helen (Steinmark's devoted sister and Margaret's friend)	„	Kate Vavasor (George's too loyal sister and Alice's friend).

<sup>1</sup> *The West Indies and North America.*

Captain Belleröach (Steinmark's friend; an adventurer who ad- mires Madame Brudo's money and ultimately marries her)	becomes Captain Bellfield (an im- pecunious swaggerer, who pursues Mrs. Greenow for her money, but is ultimately mar- ried by her and dis- ciplined).
Van Hoppen (rival to Bel- leröach for the hand of Madame Brudo)	„ Farmer Cheeseacre (rival to Bellfield).
Jeannette (maid to Madame Brudo)	remains Jeannette (maid to Mrs. Greenow).

The resemblance between play and novel would be striking enough, were it confined to this perpetuation of individual types. But the similarity goes further. Personal motives, actual incidents, occasionally actual phrases reappear in the later more elaborate work. Thus the two heroines jilt their respectable lovers, not because they have ceased to love them nor with any intention of renewing relations with earlier less eligible admirers, but from satiety with too-evident perfections, and from revolt against the uneventful comfort to which suitable marriages would condemn them. Again, the gradual revival of the old talk of union between Margaret and Steinmark in the play, between Alice and George Vavasor in the novel is due, first to the unscrupulous intriguing of a devoted sister, then to the despairing self-deception of the heroines themselves, who suddenly conceive the theory that love is of no account in matrimony. Love, they tell themselves, is at any time a delusion and a feebleness. Woman's duty is to partner a man, with him to help some cause and champion some ideal. All that, in 1864! *Plus ça change. . . .*

In the matter of incident close similarity exists between, on the one hand, the fortunes of Madame Brudo and her absurd admirers, on the other, those of Mrs. Greenow and her equally comic lovers. Each widow parades a broken heart, each finds in skilful coquetry an easy way to its repair.

It would be equally possible to quote phrases literally transcribed from unpublished play to published novel. One example will suffice. "That woman has no more idea of marrying you than she has of marrying the Bishop", says Bellfield to his rival Chesacre. "You're a podgy man, you see, and Mrs. Greenow doesn't like podgy men." In Act III, scene 3, of *The Noble Jilt*, Bellerioach informs Van Hoppen that he is about to marry Madame Brudo.

*Van Hoppen:* It's a lie, sir! It's not true, sir! . . . I am going to be married to Madame Brudo.

*Bellerioach:* That's your mistake, Burgomaster. You think you're the man but you're not. *I'm* the man. . . .

*Van Hoppen:* You haven't the means to support a wife.

*Bellerioach:* True; but, thank God, my wife has the means to support me. Now *you* have means . . . but then you're podgy. . . . Believe me, Burgomaster, Madame Brudo does not prefer a podgy man.

This parallel implies that, when the author wrote in his *Autobiography* in 1876, "the dialogue [of *The Noble Jilt*] I think to be good", he was only recording an opinion as consistent and as manfully maintained as were most of his judgments on his own written work.

Is it despite fidelity to an original model or because of it, that *Can You Forgive Her?* is as good a story as *The Noble Jilt* is a feeble play? Surely both the one and the other. When in 1850 Trollope sat down to write a drama of the Revolutionary wars in Flanders, he was in full discouragement with his own prospects as a novelist and too preoccupied with history and with rhetoric to recognize the real worth of the idea upon which his play was based. Also, as has been indicated, he chafed against the limitations of a literary form unsuited to his genius. But in 1863 he knew himself a novelist, could gauge to the full the human value of a situation, knew what was precious in a once discarded plot and what was fustian.

There came, however, yet another weapon to his aid beside

that of his own mature experience. When *The Noble Jilt* was written, Trollope bethought himself to whom he might send the manuscript for criticism. He had, while in London, met a few of his mother's literary and theatrical friends and, among them, the well-known actor George Bartley. This man, considered by his contemporaries to be a worthy successor to Dowton, Fawcett and Munden, was nearing the end of his distinguished theatrical career. He was an old friend of Frances Trollope; had written her encouragement and praise when, in 1833 and long before she was the popular novelist that by 1850 she had become, she published *The Refugee in America*; seemed from every point of view an ideal authority from whom to seek judgment and advice. To George Bartley, therefore, *The Noble Jilt* was sent.

From him in due course came a report—which report the young Trollope carefully preserved. Bartley's opinion, partially quoted in the *Autobiography*, merits full reproduction, for there is ample evidence, direct and indirect, that the author of the play so unfavourably criticized read the old actor's words with care and profit.

11 Woburn Square,  
London, 18th June 1851

My dear Mr. A. Trollope,

I am sorry I did not see you on Monday, but as I was obliged to remain in town until this afternoon, I occupied myself yesterday in carefully perusing your MS., and feel myself bound, as you ask for my opinion, to give it candidly. And it is this.

When I commenced, I had great hopes of your production. I did not think it opened dramatically, but that might have been remedied, and the dialogue, both serious and comic, promised admirably. But as the plot proceeded I found the serious parts deficient in interest, and the comic ones overlaid with repetitions. There is not one character, serious or comic, to challenge the sympathy of the audience; and without that all the good writing in the world will not ensure success upon the stage.

We are *told* the Count Upsel is a most amiable and quiet



man, but you have given him no scope to assert or prove his good qualities. He has really nothing to do.

Mark Steinburg (*sic*) is merely a republican, and why he makes his base proposal to Margaret, except to carry on the plot of the play, I cannot understand. As far as it is explained in his own person, it is wholly gratuitous; nor, if you mean him for a villain (with this fatal exception), has he anything of villainy in him; nor is his character prominently brought out. Indeed, such little lead does he or the Count take in the business of the drama, that you have a five-act play without a hero!

The comic scenes are good, but too long and all so much alike, that one is merely a repetition of the other.

Helen's character is well and boldly written and (to me) the least objectionable in the play, though I am not in love with her or her ready intermeddling.

As to the character of Margaret, I felt at a loss how to describe it and my objections to it, but you have done it for me in the last speech of Madame Brudo:

"Margaret, my child; never play the jilt again. 'Tis a most unbecoming character. Play it with what skill you will, it meets but little sympathy."

—This, be assured, would be its effect upon an audience.

So that I must reluctantly add that, had I been still a manager, "The Noble Jilt" is not a play I could have recommended for production.

I qualify all this by honestly stating I have often been mistaken in my opinion and may be wrong in this. But you ask me for my honest impressions, and I have too much regard and respect for your excellent and highly gifted mother and all her family, not to give them candidly as they are, and am most truly sorry they are not more favourable.

I am, my dear Mr. A. Trollope,

respectfully and sincerely,

yours,

Geo. Bartley.

Readers of *The Noble Jilt* will agree that this is shrewd criticism. Certainly Trollope thought it so. He was by temperament the man to accept, with respect and with humility, instructed commentary on his work; and that he took George Bartley's words to heart is proved, partly by the elements in *Can you Forgive Her?* that are lacking from *The Noble Jilt*, partly by a passage in the *Autobiography*, partly by the manner in which he himself speaks of the play when introducing it into one of his later novels.

With the first of these indications we need hardly concern ourselves. To treat of it in detail would involve elaborate analysis of a typical Trollope novel, than which few things are more complex of achievement. In effect, it is thanks to Bartley that the leading characters in *Can You Forgive Her?* challenge the reader's sympathy, and that even George Vavasor, for all his selfish violence, is a pitiful rather than a repellent figure.

The second is best illustrated by direct quotation:

In 1850 I wrote a comedy, partly in blank verse and partly in prose, called *The Noble Jilt*. I believe that I did give the best of my intellect to the play, and I must own that, when it was completed, it pleased me much. I copied it, and re-copied it, touching it here and touching it there, and then sent it to my very old friend George Bartley the actor, who would, I thought, for my own sake and for my mother's, give me the full benefit of his professional experience.

I have now [1875 or 1876] before me the letter which he wrote to me—a letter which I have read a score of times. It was altogether condemnatory . . . [there follow a series of sentences extracted from Bartley's letter] . . . A piece of criticism such as this, from a friend and from a man undoubtedly capable of forming an opinion, was a blow in the face! But I accepted the judgment loyally and said not a word on the subject to any one. I merely showed the letter to my wife, declaring my conviction that it must be taken as gospel. And as critical gospel it has since been accepted. (*Autobiography*, vol. 1, pp. 113-4).

As to the third—the deliberate introduction of the unlucky play into a novel written very shortly before the *Autobiography* itself—we can judge it *naïveté* and shrug (if we are callow enough to mistake the humours of maturity for *naïveté*), or we can chuckle at the impenitent nostalgia of the greatest novelist of his day.

From July 1871, to February 1873 there ran serially in *The Fortnightly Review* that admirable tale *The Eustace Diamonds*. The novel was published in three volumes at the end of 1872, and far on in the second volume occur the following passages:

... Mrs Carbuncle was very fond of the play and made herself acquainted with every new piece as it came out. Every actor and actress of note on the stage was well known to her, and she dealt freely in criticisms on their respective merits. The three ladies had a box at the Haymarket, taken for this very evening, at which a new piece, "The Noble Jilt", from the hand of a very eminent author, was to be produced. Mrs Carbuncle had talked a great deal about "The Noble Jilt", and could boast that she had discussed the merits of the two chief characters with the actor and actress who were to undertake them. Miss Talbot had assured her that Margaret was altogether impracticable, and Mrs Carbuncle was quite of the same opinion. And as for the hero, Steinmark,—it was a part that no man could play so as to obtain the sympathy of the audience. There was a second hero—a Flemish Count—tame as rain-water, Mrs Carbuncle said. She was very anxious for the success of the piece, which, as she said, had its merits; but she was sure that it wouldn't do....

Lucinda, also, was quite determined that she would see the new piece. She declared to her aunt, in Lizzie's presence, without a vestige of a smile, that it might be well to see how a jilt could behave herself so as to do her work of jilting in any noble fashion . . . She had no desire to stay at home in order that she might see Sir Griffin. "I daresay the play may be very bad", she said, "but it can hardly be so bad as real life. . . ."

The play, as a play, was a failure; at least so said Mrs Carbuncle. The critics, on the next morning, were somewhat divided—not only in judgment but as to facts. Three or four of the papers declared that the audience were not only eulogistic but enthusiastic. One or two others averred that the piece fell very flatly. As it was not acted above four or five dozen times consecutively, it must be regarded as a failure. On their way home Mrs Carbuncle declared that Minnie Talbot had done her very best with such a part as Margaret, but that the character afforded no scope for sympathy. “A noble jilt, my dears”, said Mrs Carbuncle eloquently, “is a contradiction in terms. There can be no such thing. A woman, when she has once said the word, is bound to stick to it. The delicacy of the female character should not admit of hesitation between two men. The idea is quite revolting”.

“But may not one have an idea of no man at all?” asked Lucinda. “Must that be revolting also?”

“Of course a young woman may entertain such an idea though for my part I look upon it as unnatural” . . . .

“If she finds that she had made a mistake——?” said Lucinda fiercely. “Why shouldn’t a young woman make a mistake as well as an old woman?”

“My dear, such mistakes, as you call them, always arise from fantastic notions. Look at this piece. Why does the lady jilt her lover? Not because she doesn’t like him. She’s just as fond of him as ever.”

“He’s a stupid sort of fellow, and I think she was quite right”, said Lizzie. . . .

In this way—and more than twenty years after Bartley’s letter was written—Trollope thought fit to introduce into a story almost the very words used by the old actor, in condemning a play whose existence could only have been known to half a dozen persons. Nostalgia? Yes, indeed. But nostalgia of the civilized kind, which, taking the initiative, cloaks its melancholy in nonchalance.

## (iii) LONDON TRADESMEN

TROLLOPE was sixty-five years old when he wrote a series of sketches of London Tradesmen for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which were for the first time issued in book-form in 1927. Not for a considerable while had he attempted any journalism beyond an occasional book review or travel letter from abroad; and it may at first sight seem curious that he should thus have undertaken, in the evening of his life, a purely journalistic task and one which could not possibly compensate him—either by reputation or by financial result—for the considerable physical exertion involved in its performance. For exertion there inevitably was. A young relative who accompanied him on one or two of the expeditions necessary to the collection of “copy”—those, for example, to Billingsgate and Covent Garden—has a vivid memory of the zest with which the old novelist set off in the small hours of the morning to the central fish and vegetable markets, of the voracious rapidity—when on the spot—of his observation and questionings, and of his return to breakfast—tired but triumphant—with sufficient material stored in his skilfully receptive mind for an article ten times as long as that which he intended to produce.

And yet, by those who appreciate what manner of man was Anthony Trollope, this eleventh-hour excursion into strenuous “realism” will be understood without difficulty. There were, surely, two main impulses to the enterprise—both of them characteristically defiant. The first was the old man’s obstinate determination not to be “downed”, either by the lassitude or by the frailty of advancing age. In contracting to supply to the *Pall Mall Gazette* a series of London vignettes, the actuality and vividness of which depended absolutely on their writer’s personal and up-to-date knowledge of traders and their ways, he threw down a challenge to his own infirmity. In precisely the same way, but this time with tragic result, he was two years later to insist on crossing to Ireland to obtain first-hand material for his novel *The Land Leaguers*. This final imprudence killed him; and one cannot doubt that Covent Garden, Smithfield and Billingsgate, in

the cold darkness of early mornings during 1880, contributed their little share of weakening to the already toil-worn constitution of one of the hardest workers of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless Trollope took his risk with open eyes. Be sure that whosoever at the time may have dreaded the headstrong energies of his old age, whosoever may since have lamented that by a little care of self he did not add another ten years to his life, the old man had neither hesitation nor regrets. He lived for work; by work he died.

And if on the one hand the writing of these studies of London Tradesmen was a gesture of defiance to his own weakness, on the other it was a blow struck for the old England which he loved against the newer England which he hated. From one point of view the little series is a kind of miniature afterthought to that immense protest against the degrading commercialism of the 'seventies—the long and angry novel called *The Way We Live Now*. Throughout the articles runs a lament against the passing of the small individual shopkeeper, with a *clientèle* of friends and a reliance on quality and service to build up a steady sufficiency of customers. With grief and alarm Trollope foresaw his substitution by the advertising middleman (cf. "The Coal Merchant"), by the department store (cf. "The Haberdasher"), and by the specious canvasser with his house-to-house impertinence (cf. "The Wine Merchant"). Of such phenomena the England which Trollope loved so well, interpreted so faithfully, was largely innocent. That they should be invading her dignified reserve, mocking her traditional values, tarnishing her honesty, caused him so fierce an agony that, like the reckless bull of an Englishman he was, he could not but drop his horns and rush roaring on the enemy.

It was, therefore, on a basis of characteristically aggressive emotion that Trollope erected this series of slight but shrewd studies for retailers' portraiture. And for all their slightness they are wonderfully his own. They are as full of his peculiar qualities and convictions as is his large-scale work, and the mental references which they provoke are numerous and interesting. Reading "The Tailor" one remembers Neefit in

*Ralph the Heir* and Thwaites in *Lady Anna*. Clearly Trollope had a feeling for tailors. But what a pity that he never introduced into a novel, transcribed into dialogue form, the standard conversation between a man ordering clothes and the man who is to make them—the conversation here so skilfully summarized! In this presentment of a man talking to his tailor is revealed, as clearly as in anything that Trollope ever wrote, his unfaltering sense of the normal in the trivial affairs of every day and his amused acceptance of polite fatuities of the upper-class life of his time.

Further glimpses of the unalterable Trollope may here and there be had. Speaking of competition among tradesmen, he declares that to overprice their wares is natural to mankind, who are only restrained by fear, lest "they be left with *their goods or their knowledge* unsold upon their hands". Who but Trollope could thus gleefully parallel the retailing activity of the shopkeeper with that of the man who has ideas to sell? Again, discussing the Plumber, he draws a disrespectful analogy between this traditional artisan and a Bishop, a lawyer, and a Cabinet Minister, who are normally as anxious as any plumber to keep their jobs alive by leaving every day a little bit unfinished. Political compromise and a habitual forgetfulness of necessary tools are, he implies, two forms of the survival instinct. No wonder that Trollope had his enemies! One may not with impunity deride thus flippantly the hallowed composites of British social faith.

The essay on the Haberdasher raises several problems in contemporary psychology, in addition to that of the gradual supersession by the big store of the small specialized shop. Feminine shopping technique as opposed to that of men, the relative efficiency of male and female shop assistants, the ideals of the at that time active "Early Closing Association" (Trollope was a strong supporter of the aims of this body and spoke in public on its behalf), and, by implication, the wider theme of "women's rights"—all are touched upon in these few pages of quick commentary, and in such a way as to reveal unmistakably the practical, pugnacious, but always warm-hearted convictions of the wise old man who wrote them.

In conclusion these essays may be recommended to students of social history, and in particular to such as enjoy a parallel between our modern preoccupation and those of earlier days.

It is interesting to read in "The Fishmonger" and "The Greengrocer" the criticism of the central market system and of proposals fifty years ago to move Covent Garden to Russell Square—not to mention Northumberland Avenue and the Green Park. It reassures (or, conversely, flatters) our cynicism to know that blackmail was already being levied in 1880 by servants in big houses on the tradesmen anxious for the householders' custom. Finally, prohibitionists and their opponents may profitably observe how enduring are the counter-claims of "wets" and "drys", how sane and yet how difficult to emphasize was then (as now) the position of the moderate in this perpetual warfare. Trollope's discussion of the public-house, which smites publican and pussyfoot alike, is unassailable for logic and for common sense; yet confessedly it points no easy middle way. And why not? Surely because in all such matters of personal decency, individual taste rather than legislation must provide the standards of behaviour. Trollope says: "There is no villainy to which education cannot reconcile us"; and the converse is equally true—that there is no nobility to which the natural human soul may not aspire.

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“BRIGHT, broken Maginn.” The concluding words of Lockhart’s famous epitaph on his friend and colleague have been so often quoted that they now seem trite. Yet they deserve a better fate, having a tenderness and sensibility which too seldom peeped out from behind the aloof and arrogant mask worn by Scott’s son-in-law, and expressing to perfection the tragedy of William Maginn.

Born in 1794, Maginn entered Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of eleven, graduated at sixteen and was LL.D. at twenty-four. While still in his teens, in addition to his mastery of the classical and Celtic tongues, he could read and translate Hebrew, Sanskrit and Syriac; by the time he was twenty-five he spoke and wrote with ease in French, German, Italian, Spanish and modern Greek, and subsequently learnt sufficient of Swedish, Russian and Turkish to make practical use of them. A voracious reader, he could absorb and remember the contents of any book, after what appeared to an onlooker to be a mere rapid turning of the pages.

A prodigy, in fact; yet at the same time eagerly aware of every facet of the life about him. There was nothing of the pedant in Maginn for all his learning, nothing of the remote, retiring scholar. To the natural conviviality of his race was added a talent for gay companionship and for effortless brilliance of talk which was all his own. His versatility was astonishing; and there was little exaggeration in the tribute paid to his memory by his friend Kenealy, and printed in *Fraser’s* shortly after his death, which describes him as:

Theologian, Historian, Poet, Metaphysician, Mathematician, Philosopher, Phrenologist, Stenographer, Fencer, Boxer, Orator, Dramatist, Reviewer, Sonneteer, Joker, Punster, Doctor of Laws, Hoaxer, Political Economist,

Newspaper Editor, Wit, Duellist, Pedestrian, Linguist, Arithmetician, O'Doherty, Pamphleteer, Translator, Epigrammatist, Antiquarian, Scholar, Conversationalist, Novelist and true Tory to the backbone. In fact a man so various that he seems to be not ~~one~~ but all mankind's epitome.

"Bright", then, is a fit epithet for Maginn—in any sense and to the utmost degree of radiance. Like a bird of vivid plumage he skimmed and dipped through the forests of journalism, of scholarship and of bohemian jollity—for a while in Edinburgh and then in London. He flashed from scurrilous satire to learned criticism; from the topical parodies and sham symposia which were such a feature first of *Blackwood's* and then of *Fraser's*, to translations from and into classical tongues, to verses transformed from French into English slang, to epigrams and maxims and stories, and even to two short novels. A dazzling, fascinating creature, who could do mean things with no atom of meanness in his motive, and brave, unselfish things without the least consciousness of virtue. Yet after less than thirty years of adult life he lay broken upon his death-bed—overwhelmed by debt, lonely and save by a few forgotten—with the colour fading swiftly from his wings.

Why was Maginn thus early and thus grievously broken? For more than one reason, of which the most obvious and direct, though tragic enough, is not perhaps the most melancholy. He became a drunkard. At first he drank with the heedless pleasure of the boon-companion; then, as troubles pressed on him, with the recklessness of desperation. The harm he caused himself was mainly physical, and he must have known that he was committing suicide. On his brain the excesses seem to have had little or no effect, save that they intensified his natural tendency to produce in scraps, and so prevented him from leaving behind any monument worthy of his extraordinary powers. That, however, together with the tightly packed and to-day tedious topicality of most of his best known journalism, accounts only for his neglect by posterity; his contemporary evanescence had other causes. The first was his unflinching critical integrity. He could slander a political

opponent with every dishonourable trick known to gutter journalism; he could scandalmonger in the columns of *The Age*, and contribute many raffish articles to Renton Nicholson's "sporting" sheet, *The Town*; he is said to have written the flash songs for Ainsworth's "Newgate" novels. But when faced with the task of judging the intellect of others, he was single-minded and incorruptible. He only praised what seemed to him to be really good, and no influence or danger could stop him from scarifying what was bad. In consequence the powerful folk who used him as a whip to flay their political enemies were liable any moment themselves to be lashed across the face for pretentious opinions or for bad writing. This they disliked.

Maginn's second handicap was his versatility. A reputation—and economic security—come more readily in Great Britain to a writer who has one line and sticks to it than to "an epitome of all mankind". Patrons, publishers and public like solid metal; Maginn was quicksilver.

And thirdly, although much of what he wrote reads so bitterly that it suggests a man eaten up with jealousy and spite, he was in fact wholly devoid alike of ambition and malice. His polemics, like his jeux d'esprit, welled up from the fertile spring of his facility. They gave him pleasure to produce, and because, as soon as one was written, the very object of his attack passed from his mind, it never occurred to him that his victim might bear him a grudge. Yet continually his life was made difficult and his progress thwarted by the resentment of those he had slandered—and forgotten.

It was in August 1842, that Maginn died at Walton-on-Thames. He was in his forty-eighth year. Lockhart's epitaph is one of the most likeable recorded gestures of a not always very likeable man. We began with his ending; let us end with his beginning:—"Here, early to bed, lies kind William Maginn. . . ."

## PRELIMINARY TO GEORGE ELIOT

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IN 1913 WERE found on a bookstall in Nottingham market three diaries, kept during 1851, 1860 and 1863, by John Chapman, "advanced" publisher, proprietor and editor of *The Westminster Review*, whose name has hitherto been mainly remembered as friend and helper of George Eliot in her early days of authorship. These diaries passed into the possession, first of Robertson Nicoll, then of Clement Shorter. In 1930 those for 1851 and 1860 were acquired by the Yale University Library, and were published in book form in 1940 with an excellent commentary and notes by Gordon S. Haight.<sup>1</sup> The 1863 diary has, one hopes but temporarily, been lost to sight.

The Journals offer primarily an astonishing self-portrait by Chapman, who was successively watch-maker, chemist, publisher and physician, and all his life a radical thinker, an energetic idealist, a man with a genius for friendship, and an inveterate womanizer. In the second place, they revolutionize the general conception of George Eliot as a young woman (revealing facts purposely suppressed by her husband and biographer J. W. Cross, and presumably unknown to Leslie Stephen when he wrote the notice in the D.N.B.), showing her to have been a tender, passionate creature, who suffered bitterly in secret for her lack of beauty, in whom *naïveté* and want of self-sufficiency blended to produce a pathetic readiness to serve any man she could admire, to admire without discrimination and, by her manner of service, to court the censure of the world.

John Chapman, son of a Nottinghamshire druggist, was born in 1821. In 1843 he married Susanna Brewitt, a girl from his own part of the country, and settled at Clapton in the north-east of London. He had just started in business as a

<sup>1</sup> *George Eliot and John Chapman: With Chapman's Diaries*. By Gordon S. Haight. Yale University Press, 1940.

book-publisher, having bought the imprint and connection of John Green in Newgate Street. The first book to appear over his name was a small treatise by himself on "human nature", which was published in February 1844.

Even in this their earliest ménage the Chapmans took in boarders. Among them was Eliza Lynn (afterwards Mrs. Lynn Linton), who published anonymously in 1847 a very solemn historical novel called *Azeib the Egyptian*, and (though not in her presence) was flippantly nicknamed "Miss Sennacherib" by the Brays of Coventry and by Mrs. Bray's sister, Sara Hennell, another young lady member of the Chapman circle. Eliza Lynn was at the severe, intolerant, not to say priggish, stage of intellectual youth. She did not board with the Chapmans after their move from Clapton but attended some of their later parties; and her comments on the frequenters of Chapman's salon (in particular on G. H. Lewes and on the future George Eliot) read so oddly in the posthumous volume of unrevised fragments entitled *Memoirs of my Literary Life* that Beatrice Harraden felt bound to apologize for them in her preface.

By 1851 (the date of the first diary extant) Chapman had grown very critical of his wife's capacities and character. According to him Susanna was a bad housekeeper—slatternly, unpunctual, cheeseparing yet wasteful; also she had conventional views on religion, and bouts of bad health which interfered with her husband's restless plans. One cannot but sympathize with the poor woman who, from the very outset of her married life, had to cope simultaneously with tiny children, paying guests in her home, frequent evening parties, and a suspicious conglomeration of young females, resident and otherwise, who clustered round her husband. Possibly Chapman, a born polygamist, would have destroyed the peace of any household; but undeniably he and Susanna were peculiarly ill-matched. She was at once censorious and querulous, and had little beauty to make up for her nagging inefficiency. In later years her patient endurance of Chapman's erratic infidelities may count to her for righteousness, even though it cannot easily be explained on other than economic grounds.

In 1847 the Chapmans took a large house at 142 Strand, the lower floor of which served as publishing offices, while upstairs John and Susanna lived with their two children (now three and one and a half years old respectively) and a greatly increased number of boarders. These boarders were highly miscellaneous and of varying permanence. Several distinguished Americans, from Emerson downwards, came and went; visiting provincials often made the house a temporary home. But there was one member of the household who appeared as established as Mrs. Chapman herself, a beautiful creature called Elisabeth Tilley, nominally governess to the children and helper in the house, actually Chapman's mistress.

January 1851 saw the first appearance on the Chapman stage of Mary Ann Evans, a low-voiced, rather plain young woman, and, in Chapman's words "shy, calm and affectionate". She had had contact with the publisher some four years earlier in connection with a translation he planned to issue; but it was not until after her father's death, after a winter in Geneva, and after a prolonged stay with her friends the Brays at Coventry, that she met him on other than a business footing. He visited Coventry on affairs connected with his firm, suggested that she should write an article suitable for *The Westminster Review*, and persuaded her to pay a trial visit to 142 Strand some time in November 1850. During this visit, at a literary party, she had her first encounter with Eliza Lynn, who had now published a second novel of a remote historical kind (*Amy-mone*, 1848) and was in treaty with Chapman for the issue of a more promising third—*Realities: A Story of Modern Life*. To the Brays, Mary Ann Evans wrote: "Miss Lynn said she was never so attracted to a woman before as to me. I am 'such a lovable person'." Miss Evans' misunderstanding or Miss Lynn's insincerity? Inevitably one or the other, for the latter's account of her "first meeting with George Eliot" reads:

I will candidly confess my shortsighted prejudices with respect to this—to be—celebrated person... she was essentially underbred and provincial... she held her hands and arms kangaroo fashion; was badly dressed; had an unwashed, unbrushed, unkempt look altogether; and

she assumed a tone of superiority over me which I was not then aware was warranted by her undoubted leadership.

It is impossible in this conflict of impression not to side with Mary Ann Evans. Provincial she was, and also, no doubt, awkward and dowdy; but what seemed to Eliza Lynn "a tone of superiority" could only have been shyness. All the evidence goes to show that, though she was a serious young woman, she was tentative, lacking in self-confidence, and of the kind to be easily disconcerted by the sophistication of Literary London. But the impression made on Miss Lynn proved oddly durable. Except in the early period of her happiness with Lewes, George Eliot remained an object of dislike to Mrs. Lynn Linton. "Success and adulation spoilt her and destroyed all simplicity, all sincerity of character. She grew to be artificial, posée, pretentious, unreal. . . . She was a made woman, as one makes a statue or a vase. She took a fine type for imitation; but the result was not a flesh and blood woman. Not a line of spontaneity was left in her, not an impulse beyond the reach of self-conscious philosophy."

It would appear that the two ladies were incompatible.

The fortnight in November 1850 so far pleased Miss Evans that in January of the following year she became a regular resident in Chapman's house, "improved" her Christian name into "Marian", and was soon a close collaborator in his business ventures. Chapman's publications were predominantly of a learned and free-thinking kind—works on philosophy, the history and nature of various religions, social science and advanced politics. These subjects being those in which Miss Evans was most interested, she was drawn into intimate contact with her landlord, who used her for writing prospectuses, revising manuscripts, translating and (during the preliminary negotiation for the acquisition of *The Westminster Review*) as his principal adviser on all matters connected with the magazine.

Chapman being what he was—a handsome, engaging and therefore successful sensualist—his collaboration with Marian Evans soon developed on his side into love-making. In his

estimate of her response the Editor of these diaries shows discernment and delicacy. On the very first page of his Preface he quotes from the autobiography of Charles Bray of Coventry, a girlhood friend of Marian, who took her to a phrenologist to have a cast made of her head. This cast showed that "she was of a most affectionate disposition, always requiring someone to lean on, preferring what has hitherto been considered the stronger sex. She was not fitted to stand alone".

"Always requiring someone to lean on . . . not fitted to stand alone". Mr. Haight repeats these two phrases, and they serve as the text for his interpretation of the real George Eliot.

When in 1851 Marian Evans came under Chapman's spell, she provided one more piece of evidence that once bitten is not necessarily twice shy. Already some eight years earlier invited to Devizes to assist the learned father of her friend Rufa Brabant in the compilation of a huge work designed to purge Christianity of any supernatural element, she had discovered a philanderer beneath a veneer of scholarship, and suffered humiliation at the hands of Mrs. Brabant.

Rufa Brabant (now Mrs. Charles Hennell, and well-acquainted with Chapman) described to him in the summer of 1851 her friend's misadventures in her father's household. She told him (according to Chapman's diary) that "in the simplicity of her heart and her ignorance of (or incapability of practising) the required conventionalisms, she gave the Doctor the utmost attention and they became very intimate. Mrs. B. vowed she should never enter the house again". A confidence of this kind, made to a man of Chapman's inclination, can hardly have failed to put ideas into his head.

The shock to Marian Evans' inexperience of the Brabant imbroglio left its bitterness, which later emerged in the portrait of Casaubon in *Middlemarch* "whose soul went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying", as he wrote and re-wrote his *Key to All Mythologies*. But, so far from curing her of the longing to serve some man of intellect and help him to benefit the world, it made her the readier to succumb a second time and to believe that in Chapman, at any rate, she had found the real



thing in masculine idealism. This undoubtedly is what she told herself; but it is equally certain (though she was perhaps unaware of it) that his physical allurements called strongly to her, and that the woman in her rejoiced, by staunch qualities of mind and heart, to win for herself the attention hitherto paid to the untutored beauty of Elisabeth Tilley.

For, whatsoever may have been the lengths to which, in her fond admiration for Chapman, Marian went, the fury of jealousy raised in Elisabeth by the intruder's relationship with her lover proves that he markedly neglected her in favour of his new and talented assistant. The very day after Marian's arrival he notes in his Diary:—(January 9, 1851) "Had a very painful altercation with Elisabeth, the result of her groundless suspicions." Two days later the situation is complicated by the re-appearance of Eliza Lynn, who must previously have been more intimate with Chapman than years afterward she chose to recall. Her novel *Realities*<sup>1</sup> was now in proof, and on 11th January Chapman notes:—"Read through one of Miss L.'s proofs of a love-scene which is warmly and vividly depicted, with a tone and tendency I entirely disapprove. Miss Evans concurs with me, and Elisabeth and Susanna are most anxious I should not publish the work. Miss E. and Susanna had a long talk on the point, when S. became excited and used language in reference to Miss L. unbecoming and unjust. She said that I, when conversing with Miss L. in her presence on the subject, had 'lowered myself'."

The problem of *Realities* dominates the Diary for more than a week. Eliza Lynn refuses to expurgate. Chapman maintains his moral attitude. On 14th January she writes him "an unkind note"; on 19th January "an insulting note"; on

<sup>1</sup> *Realities* was published by Saunders & Otley in May 1851. The novel shortly after publication, reappears once more in Chapman's Diary for June 4 1851, on which day he makes the following characteristic entry:—

"Last evening Miss Lynn's novel gave rise to a discussion concerning the expediency of giving or withholding from girls, when they reach puberty, a knowledge of the nature and consequence of the sexual function and its uses and abuses; comprehending of course careful instruction and guidance in respect to their relation to the male-sex. Opinion preponderated in favour of giving such instruction. Had a long talk with M."

21st January "her bitterness against me is extreme". Finally he undertakes to find another publisher, pays a forfeit of £5, and Miss Lynn and her objectionable passages "go elsewhere".

Not so Elisabeth and her jealous rage. On 22nd January:

Invited Miss Evans to go out after breakfast; did not get a decisive answer. E. afterwards said if I did so, she would be glad to go. I then invited Miss Evans again telling her E. would go, whereupon she declined rather rudely. Susanna being willing to go out, I proposed they should go a short distance without me, which E. considered an insult from me and reproached me in no measured terms accordingly, and heaped upon me suspicions and accusations I do not in any way deserve. I was very severe and harsh, said things I was sorry for afterwards, and we became reconciled in the park. Miss Evans apologised for her rudeness tonight, which roused all E.'s jealousy again, and consequently bitterness.

On 24th January: "Elisabeth has not spoken kindly to me since Thursday evening—on account of Miss Evans." On 3rd February: "Elisabeth came after having been to the College. One of the first things she said was that she wished she might never enter the house again." On 18th February the contagion spreads (not surprisingly) to Susanna:

I presume with the view of arriving at a more friendly understanding S. and E. had a long talk this morning which resulted in their comparing notes on the subject of my intimacy with Miss Evans, and their arrival at the conclusion that we are completely in love with each other. E. being intensely jealous herself, said all she could to cause S. to look from the same point of view, which a little incident (her finding me with my hand in M.'s) had quite prepared her for. E. betrayed my trust and her own promise. S. said to me that if ever I went to M.'s room again she will write to Mr. Bray and say she dislikes her.

On 19th February:

My room upset. Sat in the dining room to write in the morning where M. joined me. We talked of course of the excited feelings of S. and E. . . . E. made some bitter remarks on account of our being in the dining room (i.e. together), and I therefore passed the afternoon in S.'s room without a fire. S. had a long talk with M. before dinner, unsatisfactorily to S. from the high tone M. took. Conversation renewed after dinner in my presence when M. confessed S. had reason to complain, and a reconciliation was effected.

In short, the state of affairs at 142 Strand, from the beginning of 1851 until early October when Elisabeth seems finally to have taken her departure, was frankly fantastic. If the facts, as written down daily by Chapman, were not before our very eyes, they would be incredible. The astonishing man—a breath-taking mixture of complacent Lothario, ingenuous prig and flustered publisher—lived surrounded by three women, in a constant succession of bitter quarrels and passionate reconciliations. He laments his miserable fate and in the next line reproaches himself for his own want of self-control. To the trio of “dearest friends” he explains desperately that he loves them all—each in a different way. When one of them writes him in complaint of another, he often hands on the letter to the lady concerned, asking for sympathy. As for the ladies themselves, they go out walking in varying couples (swearing alliance against the third) or with Chapman himself (exchanging barbed civilities). Susanna and Elisabeth (presumably on grounds of length of tenure) gradually draw together against Marian, who goes away for weeks at a time, yet always softens when Chapman pleads for her continued help, and returns and slaves for him.

Any ordinary man, even though he were himself to blame for the tumult of his home, would have broken away in one direction or another long before the autumn. But Chapman was not an ordinary man, and on Friday 26th September

achieves a climax of artless effrontery. "It seems to me", he writes, "that in proximity with women a man cannot command his own peace!"

The diary for 1851 lacks a number of pages. At several points (usually at moments of rising drama) three or four leaves have been cut away. These lacunae, and the complete absence of the diaries for 1852 and 1853, make it impossible to tell the whole story of Marian Evans' relationship with her preposterous Lovelace. It is known that until November 1853 she lived off and on in Chapman's house, but the emotional atmosphere cannot be recorded. In all likelihood—on her side at least—it steadily cooled. She worked incessantly for *The Westminster Review* (which Chapman purchased late in 1851 and the first number of which to appear over his imprint was that for January 1852); and, as her infatuation had from the first been a desire to serve a good cause and to use for the benefit of a man she identified with that cause the talents and knowledge she possessed, rather than to float happily on the tide of a love-affair, it may be assumed that in work she found an adequate outlet for her emotional zeal.

Further, the spring of 1852 saw a rapid development of her intimacy with Herbert Spencer. "The story of their relations is a strange one" says Mr. Haight, "which I hope to discuss in detail in another volume". But he gives sufficient of a summary forthwith to show that Spencer would have asked Marian Evans to marry him had she been more beautiful, even though (as he had written to a friend not long before) "marriage is too much trouble, and as I see no probability of being able to marry without being a drudge, why I have pretty well given up the idea". That Miss Evans would have taken him, had he offered, cannot be doubted. Throughout 1852 she was manifestly slipping into yet a third passionate subjection, for a third time imagining she had found the perfect man, thanks to whom she need not stand alone. Certainly this third candidate was better qualified than either of his predecessors; but posterity may rejoice over his insistence on beauty and his fear of drudgery for (as Mr. Haight shrewdly says) "It is unlikely that Marian would have influenced him

much more than she did: but of one thing we may be reasonably sure—there would have been no George Eliot”.

Already a fourth ideal was on the way—a genuine one this time or, at any rate, one destined to survive. 1851 had been Chapman’s year, 1852 Spencer’s, 1853 (and twenty-five years thereafter) were to belong to George Henry Lewes. Marian Evans first met Lewes in Jeff’s bookshop in the autumn of 1851; by October 1853, when she finally left 142 Strand and went into lodgings off Edgware Road, the two were intimate friends, and, according to Oscar Browning, it was off Edgware Road that their “married life” began. Lewes’ private unhappiness and the courageous gaiety and charming unselfishness with which he bore his prolonged and painful headaches went directly to Marian’s heart. Here was a man who at the same time needed her and, by his qualities of practical good sense, quickness of mind and self-forgetful pluck, could give her precisely the support she needed. In the summer of 1854, proudly and of her own free will, she went away with him, and from that moment entered into her kingdom. She now had happiness; before long she was to have fame as well.

Chapman, with the rather engaging insouciance of the philanderer, wished the lovers every luck and defended them against their detractors. He was pained—in all probability genuinely hurt—to find himself slowly shut out of Marian Lewes’ life. To a lady-killer of the easy-come easy-go kind bygones are readily agreed to be bygones, even if they have barely gone by. Possibly Marian on her own would have been more responsive. Her soft heart and her keen interest in Chapman’s book and periodical ventures would likely have impelled her to continue to give him help and advice. But from the first Lewes acted as a screen between George Eliot and the world, and against no one was the screen more impenetrable than against the blithe adventurer who for a while had subjugated the woman Lewes loved and venerated.

With the disappearance of George Eliot, Mr. Haight’s narrative, as well as the Diary for 1860, centre on Chapman himself. They are in their way as absorbing and bizarre as

their predecessors. Difficulties, both emotional and financial, were accumulating, Elisabeth was supplanted, or was intended to be supplanted, by—of all people—Barbara Leigh Smith, who later became Madame Bodichon and virtually co-founder of Girton College. But Miss Leigh Smith was forcibly removed from his influence by her relatives, and was succeeded by Johanna van Heyligenstaedt, a German beauty come to study singing in London. Susanna stormed, left home and returned again; the raptures of Chapman and Johanna continued. Then Johanna went to Paris and to Italy, where she made a triumphant début on the operatic stage. While Chapman sent her a handsome monthly allowance, her letters yearned towards him; but she was slowly passing out of his reach and was well aware of it. It is not certain whether she was equally aware that, even while she was near at hand, he had easily enjoyed her younger sister.

No such alleviations lightened the gloom of Chapman's financial problem. His last years as publisher and as owner of *The Westminster Review* were a time of shameless borrowing from anyone rash enough to lend. Time and again a wealthy man of radical opinions, impressed by Chapman's eager speculative mind and brilliant personality, provided capital for the tottering business. The last to do so—a Mr. Manwaring—arranged to take over altogether, but himself went bankrupt before the negotiation was completed, having been driven to bankruptcy (there is a sinister suggestion to this effect) by Chapman's devoting to his own use large sums of money advanced for the *Review*.

At last (in April 1862) *The Westminster* and the publishing list, already the property of mortgagees, were transferred to Trübner, though strangely enough the editorship of the *Review* was left in Chapman's hands. Meantime Chapman himself, who as early as 1855 had decided that "it would be a great relief to me, when I am no longer in business, to have a medical degree to fall back upon", slid comfortably from publishing to medicine. And cheaply as well as comfortably; for at the cost of £25 and *in absentia* he secured a medical degree from the University of St. Andrews, which possessed

one professor of medicine, no hospital or laboratory, and conferred degrees at an annual rate which, by 1862, had risen to 605! The long distance affair with Johanna was considerably wilted, for the money he sent her had grown less. In 1874 he split finally with Susanna and went to Paris, continuing to edit *The Westminster* from there. In 1879 he married an American widow twelve years his junior. In 1894—still in Paris and still editor of *The Westminster*—he died.

The personality of this extraordinary man cannot be better summarized than in Mr. Haight's words:

Vanity and humility, shrewdness and generosity, quackery and zeal for reform mingle unpredictably in him. Using money secured by dubious means to bring out important books that no one else would publish, he exerted a stimulating influence upon English thought. A man of sudden and shifting enthusiasms, he edited *The Westminster Review* continuously for forty-three years. Throughout a life of deliberate sensuality, his Diaries show him striving, apparently quite sincerely, for moral improvement. . . . In the years of George Eliot's fame he must sometimes have recalled their remarkable friendship. The secrets that she entrusted to him before she found someone else to lean upon, he never betrayed. During the fourteen years he survived her, when the slightest acquaintance prompted writers to gratify an eager public with reminiscences, Chapman held his peace. In one not given to reticence, such persistent silence should not pass unnoticed.

THE HISTORY of English novel-writing during the period of "branded" fiction offers no more complete example than Miss Braddon, of a writer owing to a single, too successful book, not only reputation and fortune, but also the partial atrophy of a real and distinguished talent. It was Mary Braddon's destiny (both fortunate and unfortunate) to become known the world over as the author of *Lady Audley's Secret*. Her long life of seventy-seven years was one of ceaseless but unflagging toil as a writer of stories. No novelist of her century won a wider or more lasting popularity; none knew better than she what is meant by "writing for one's life"; few were subject to any thing approaching the obloquy which she suffered from critics and moralists. As a dogged, courageous and finally triumphant bread-winner she may be paralleled with Frances Trollope and with Margaret Oliphant; but as an innocent victim of contemporary prejudice, and as a pariah cruelly baited by her kind, she stands alone. True, she outlived her time of detraction, and for the last thirty years of her life was sedulously courted instead of vilified. But between 1860 and 1880 only Bulwer-Lytton and Charles Reade among prominent writers stood openly by her. The former she acclaimed as her master, and had from him continual encouragement and advice; the latter—being himself a solitary and generally at odds with his fellows—delighted to give gruff and loyal support to one who was suffering at the hands of people he hated and despised.

Luckily Miss Braddon's nature was of the kind which grows in strength and serenity, the greater the trials it has to bear. She had that peculiarly feminine quality of resilient but unostentatious courage which smiles through adversity and, when trouble is past, becomes a tranquil contentment based partly on delight in peace, partly on disillusion.

Of small medium size, she was very gentle in manner and



full of a quiet satirical humour, which led her to see the comic side even of catastrophe and made both self-pity and vicarious indignation impossible to her. She would at times almost apologize for her cheerful acceptance of the world as it is, which by the solemn standards of the day was blamed on her for flippancy or worse. Replying to a letter from Bulwer-Lytton, in which he had begged her more greatly to respect the novelist's art, she wrote (probably in 1865):—"I *will* try and write a better book upon the principle suggested in your beautiful letter. But there has arisen in my mind of late years a kind of indifference—not as to religion, but as to this lower life and the trouble we give ourselves in living it. I have begun to question the expediency of very deep emotion, and I think when one does that, one must have passed beyond the power of feeling it. It is this which, I believe, causes the flippancy of tone which jars upon you. I cannot help looking down on my heroes when they suffer, because I always have in mind the memory of wasted suffering of my own."

Later, and to the same friend, she wrote:

I have been thinking much of what you say of my want of earnestness, and I can account for it in many ways. . . . For the last five years I have lived chiefly amongst thoroughly practical people—very clever but entirely unpoetic. All the sentiment I ever had seems to have faded out of my mind. . . . The ridiculous side of things strikes me before the poetic, and the other night at the play I was more inclined to laugh at than be touched by the heroine's passions.

It was inevitable that the experiences and anxieties of her early years of authorship, by bringing her face to face with the corruption and harsh materialism which underlay the fair surface of the writing world, should have taught her a certain mild cynicism. But the process was merely a slight hardening of a gay unpretentiousness inherent in her; and even if her life had been one of carefree ease, she would never have been able to take herself or the attitudes of others with an excess of seriousness. Sir Hugh Walpole, writing about her novels (and in particular *The Ladies' Mile*) remarked on the humour which

always lightens even her turgidity. "I am not at all sure" he said, "that Hector's flowing hair and William Crawford's masterpieces" (two of the chief characters in *The Ladies' Mile*) "do not seem to her in her private chamber quite as absurd as they do to us". And it can hardly be doubted that they did.

This, however, is not to say that Miss Braddon wrote dishonestly or otherwise than her best, any more than that the word "cynicism" used above should be taken in an extreme sense. She was the opposite of a sceptic, being indeed a religious woman and (what was more important) a genuine believer in *goodness* as a personal ideal. But she was unimpressed by much of the pomposity and many of the solemn affectations of her day, because she knew from personal experience that they were largely shams and often cloaked meanness and extortion. She knew also that even when harmless in themselves, they were only for such as could afford them—being irrelevant to the grim job of making a living, which had been her own job for so many struggling years. She therefore took leave to laugh at them. In the same way, her attitude to her own work was essentially realistic. She loved writing and put into it all she had of vigour and inventiveness; but its main purpose was to earn money, and she was not vain enough to think herself or her art degraded by frankly admitting the fact. Her earning capacity would have suffered if she had withheld the conventional sentimentalities and exaggerations which her public demanded. So the public should have the kind of heroes and heroines it liked; and if, while creating them, she occasionally smiled, that was her business and hers only.

\* \* \* \* \*

The events of Miss Braddon's young womanhood and the reasons for her enforced drudgery as a writer for money are extremely obscure. This obscurity was on her part deliberately maintained and we must not seek to dispel it; but it is interesting to speculate in general terms on what *may* have happened, because her whole record and achievement as a novelist

depends for its significance on the conditions under which she worked between 1860 and 1870.

Born in 1837, daughter of a solicitor of good family and fortunate in a good private education, she was, so far as could be foreseen, destined for the usual sheltered life of an intelligent and cultivated young woman of the upper middle class. She began writing for amusement as a girl in her 'teens, and about 1856 was offered ten pounds by a printer in Beverley for a story combining "the humour of Dickens with the dramatic quality of G. W. M. Reynolds". The result, which carried out the instructions with comic fidelity, was a tale called *Three Times Dead or the Secret of the Heath*. It was prepared for issue in penny numbers and illustrated with woodcuts of the most lurid kind, but, owing to the bankruptcy of the Beverley printer, probably never completed publication.

Shortly after this, Miss Braddon seems to have left home. What actually happened to separate her from the family circle and put her on her own as a struggling writer of serials is not known; but it may be stated with comparative certainty that as early as 1860 she was supporting herself by the desperate scribbling of hack-fiction and, for a while at least, was on the stage under the name of "Seaton".

Anonymously or under assumed names, she contributed to the *Halfpenny Journal*, *Reynolds' Miscellany* and similar repositories of violent and villainous romance. In 1861 she was in London, had published a very Browningsque volume of poems, and had already made acquaintance with John Maxwell, the man she was later to marry.<sup>1</sup>

John Maxwell was a young magazine-publisher. In 1858 he started *Town Talk*, and printed in one of its early numbers the portrait-sketch of Thackeray by Edmund Yates which

<sup>1</sup> It has been said above that the obscurity which shrouds the events of Mary Braddon's young womanhood must, in so far as it was of her own contriving, be respected. The development of her friendship with John Maxwell was a subject about which she always maintained the utmost reticence. Consequently, behind the publishing history of her early works there has lain—and must continue to lie—a curious vacuum of personal life. This much may permissibly be said—that Maxwell, when he and Miss Braddon met, was a married man with a wife in a mental home. Not until after her death in 1874 could he face the world as the husband of the "Author of Lady Audley's Secret".

led to all the pother at the Garrick Club; in 1859 he bought *The Welcome Guest* from Vizetelly; and in 1860 launched *Temple Bar*, which he designed as an unillustrated but bulkier rival to *The Cornhill*. Maxwell maintained a definite standard of quality in all his periodical ventures, and was evidently an energetic and businesslike man. But it is possible that his zeal and ambition outran his resources, for there can be little doubt that some time in 1860 or 1861 he became indebted for a large sum of money to the publishing firm of Ward & Lock, who in the early 'fifties had become rivals to Routledge in the cheap-edition market. What exactly was the relationship between Maxwell and Ward & Lock may never be known; but it must have been, at first, one of close collaboration and then one of embittered hostility. Spasmodic reflections of the story can be caught in the appearance of Miss Braddon's early work.

In 1861 occurred four publishing events, and probably in this order. Maxwell had the idea of reissuing *Three Times Dead*, and having secured (or thinking to have secured) the copyright, which he believed had reverted to the author after the Beverley bankruptcy, in 1861 published the book through Ward & Lock as an ostensibly new novel entitled *The Trail of the Serpent or Three Times Dead*.<sup>1</sup> Ward & Lock launched a paper called *The Sixpenny Magazine*. Maxwell founded a paper called *Robin Goodfellow*. Ward & Lock started a "Shilling Library of New Fiction" in order to take immediate advantage of the repeal of the Paper Duties.

These events had curious interactions. *Robin Goodfellow* (published by Maxwell) contained a serial story called *Lady Audley's Secret*. The *Sixpenny Magazine* (published by Ward & Lock) contained another: *The Captain of the Vulture*, which began in September, 1861, with the paper's second number. *Robin Goodfellow* only lived for thirteen weeks, and the unfinished *Lady Audley* was promptly begun again as a serial in the *Sixpenny Magazine* (published by Ward & Lock) starting in Vol. II, No. 3 (March, 1862). Finally, the fourth volume in Ward & Lock's Shilling Library was *Lady Lisle*, a short novel

<sup>1</sup> See Postscript, p. 81.

by Miss Braddon, and the fourteenth volume was *The Captain of the Vulture*, which had by then ended its serial career.

Now it is evident that Miss Braddon and Maxwell were friends, so that her serial in *Robin Goodfellow* was natural enough. But her early connection with Ward & Lock can only be explained by the assumption that Maxwell introduced her to the firm, and was either employed by them or had some influence on their choice of authors. This, then, was the period of cordiality.

*Lady Audley's Secret* (as is proved by a Publisher's Note to Vol. III of the *Sixpenny Magazine*) was a big draw in serial form, and its prospects as a book must obviously have been bright. But in 1862 Ward & Lock were not publishers of three-deckers; hence the amiability of their reference to the novel's forthcoming appearance in three volumes over another (Tinsley) imprint. It is unlikely, however, that they were prepared for what happened. *Lady Audley* was published in three volumes in the autumn of 1862, and almost immediately one of those mysterious and hysterical successes, which now and again convulse the world of novel-publishing and help to perpetuate the natural cynicism of publishers, caught up the book, its author and its author's future, and swept them into notoriety, and (eventually) into prosperity. From that day to this, in one form or another, *Lady Audley's Secret* has continued to sell. For forty years at least it so dominated its author's life that she had persistently to write more or less to its pattern, because the public rejected her offers of anything different and would not be refused more of the same kind. Only in very old age, when the generation had passed away who used to clamour at the libraries for the three latest volumes of Miss Braddon, was she free from the tyranny of her own fantastic popularity; and not the least remarkable achievement of this very remarkable woman is, that among her last books are two at least—*The Rose of Life* and *The Green Curtain* (published respectively in 1905 and 1911)—which have not only freshness and originality, but also a quality quite different from the long series of their sensational predecessors.

Returning to the early 'sixties, we observe that, shortly

before the publication of *Lady Audley* in library form, a new Braddon serial—*Aurora Floyd*—started in *Temple Bar*, which (it will be remembered) was a newly created Maxwell magazine. But Tinsley had tied their new author for subsequent books, and in any case Maxwell at that date was no more prepared to publish three-volume fiction than were Ward & Lock. So the next three novels of the sensationally successful author of *Lady Audley's Secret* (*Aurora Floyd* '62; *Eleanor's Victory* '63; and *John Marchmont's Legacy* '63) also came from Tinsley, and were highly profitable alike to author and publisher, seeing that on each of the last two Miss Braddon received £2,000 for a two-years' license.

So far, good. But now Maxwell had the ingenious idea of publishing his friend's novels through a firm created by himself for the purpose. The result was that during 1864 and 1865 four three-deckers (*Henry Dunbar*, *The Doctor's Wife*, *Only a Clod*, and *Sir Jasper's Tenant*) appeared over the imprint "John Maxwell & Co.", which had first shown itself in the late autumn of 1863 on works by Sala and Edmund Yates.

It may be taken for certain that at this juncture acute trouble developed between Maxwell and Ward & Lock. The nature of the quarrel is not known, but it would appear that the former found himself heavily in the latter's debt, and that, as much from personal hostility to Maxwell as from a desire for money, Ward & Lock secured a lien on the earnings of Mary Braddon, who was at that time on very intimate terms with her young friend and publisher. Whatsoever the details of the affair, her frantic productivity during the next few years is proof enough of a need for money beyond the ordinary; and the most likely explanation is that Ward & Lock, sore with themselves for missing a best-seller and now furious at the acumen of their former employé, contrived, on contractual or other grounds, to trip him up and, in effect, to foreclose on a mortgage.<sup>1</sup>

In consequence, poor Mary Braddon, as some of her correspondence shows, found herself compelled to work off Max-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Montague Summers makes the interesting suggestion that an anonymous three-decker *Put to the Test*, published by Maxwell in 1865 and republished in 1876 as "edited by Miss Braddon", was in fact her work, but unavowed in order to elude the Ward & Lock foreclosure.

well's debt by supplying novels and serials until the Ward & Lock claim was satisfied. She wrote to Bulwer-Lytton on 16th January, 1866, that she was "worried by an attempt of a rich firm (having lent money to the proprietor of a magazine in the name of Maxwell & Co.) to withhold from me £1,000". She has to go to Chancery and even then may not secure the money which is the balance owing to her from the sale of *Sir Jasper's Tenant* "published by Maxwell & Co. for me at my own risk". She adds: "Maxwell himself had no hand in the proceeding; it is malice against him for having acted as my agent that has prompted the attempt."

Later in 1866 she writes again about "a most dishonest claim made against me for publisher's commission on my last four novels" by which she has been "unjustly kept out of £1,000" and has had to sell Consols to buy a house at Richmond "which the use of 'Sir Jasper' money would have saved me".

Finally, and later still in the same year, she writes to another friend: "I have been compelled for the last three years to preserve a certain secrecy with regard to my position on account of commercial entanglements which might have stripped me of hardly earned possessions." Manifestly she had become involved in Maxwell's financial difficulties.

Her bondage lasted from 1866 to 1871, during which period no fewer than seven novels appeared over the imprint of Ward, Lock & Tyler.<sup>1</sup> At last, with *The Lovels of Arden*, she became a Maxwell author again, and (save on one or two special occasions) so remained. Nor was this feverish novel-writing all of her activity. As early as 1864 she was nominal editor of *The St. James's Magazine* ("editing" meant fictional contributions if nothing else); was billed for a serial in *The London Journal* and another in *Temple Bar*; and in the same year, with an introduction from Maxwell, called on Robert Buchanan, editor of *The Welcome Guest*, in search of yet a further commission. In February 1867 she started the magazine *Belgravia*, which with its Christmas and Summer Annuals, its *Mistletoe*

<sup>1</sup> *The Ladies' Mile*; *Birds of Prey*; *Rupert Godwin*; *Dead Sea Fruit*; *Charlotte's Inheritance*; *Run to Earth*, and *Fenton's Quest*.

*Bough*, its regular serial and other implications was to keep her busy for many years.

It is obvious that all this desperate scribbling was forced on Mary Braddon by money-needs of a wholly abnormal kind. Her correspondence with Bulwer-Lytton (to whom more than to any other writer she avowed her troubles) contains more than one allusion to desperate writing for money and against time—a drudgery which so successful an author would never have had to face, if she really received the profits which accrued from her books. For example: “I know that my writing teems with errors, absurdities, contradictions and inconsistencies, but I have never written a line that has not been written against time and sometimes with the printer waiting at the door. . . . I do an immense deal of work which nobody ever hears of, for halfpenny and penny journals. It is the most piratical stuff and would make your hair stand on end if you were to see it. The amount of crime, tragedy, murder, slow poisoning and general infamy required by the halfpenny reader is something terrible. I am just going to do a little parricide for this week’s supply.” Again:—“It has been my good or bad fortune to be flung into a very rapid market and to have everything printed and published almost before the ink with which it was written was dry. . . . I wrote some part of the second and the third vol. of *Lady Audley* in less than a fortnight.”

For nearly ten years she must have borne an almost intolerable burden, and her son testified that she would never speak of this unhappy period of her life. But she endured both bravely and successfully, and by 1871 may be presumed to have conquered her embarrassments and earned her release. In that year, the Maxwell imprint reappears on her books, and from that year onward talk of money worries fades from such of her correspondence as I have seen, so that she gives the impression of one who is still a hard worker by habit, who still intends to give a faithful public what it wants, but in more or less of comfort and only as regularly as her own convenience allowed.



In the first sentence of this essay it was suggested that Miss Braddon suffered a partial atrophy of her genuine literary talent because for several years she was compelled to repeat, with superficial variations, her first overwhelming success. That she had such a genuine talent will be appreciated by any who take the trouble to read any of her dozen best books, or a selection of her short stories.

The modern reader must be prepared to make allowance for the length to which mid-Victorian authors were compelled to write by the exigencies of the market. He must endure the genteelisms and periphrases—many of them due to the influence of Bulwer-Lytton—which crowd her pages (one man on his return from fishing is asked: "Any piscatorial prize of an edible nature?"). He must also accept the moralizings, the aggressive virtues, the unrelieved (but carefully selected) villainies on which subscribers to *Mudies* insisted. But these concessions granted, he will surely admit that her stories show a power of invention, a knowledge of the world, an understanding of the human mind under emotion and a mastery of easy vivid English far beyond the ordinary. Educated contemporaries recognized those qualities and saluted them. One critic of *John Marchmont's Legacy* declared that since the death of Charlotte Brontë no writer except Miss Braddon had dared to paint a heroine of flesh and blood, and found in her work all the ingenuity of Wilkie Collins, plus passion, from which the author of *The Woman in White* carefully refrained. A "Saturday Reviewer" also compared her favourably with Collins as a creator of real human beings of both sexes and described her English prose style as "wonderfully good". "The make of the sentences" he said, "and the choice of words, the easiness with which the sense is conveyed and the absence of all that is awkward and ponderous are sufficient to satisfy the exigencies of the most rigid criticism."

The irony of the case is, however, that but for the circumstances which drove her to over-production, she would never have gained the experience which gives to her work its outstanding qualities of deftness and sophistication. Hence the difficulty of appraising her talent as it deserves, while still

the obscurity persists in which her early adventures are shrouded. It is impossible that she should have acquired her knowledge of men's ways, her tolerant attitude toward human frailty, and her power to depict feminine nature in contact with a world both dangerous and indifferent, without having herself lived a fuller and a more hazardous life than has been (or is ever likely to be) recorded.

On the other hand, the ill-fortune, the indiscretion or the moral courage which, by throwing her on her own resources, gave her a knowledge of the world she could hardly otherwise have acquired, compelled her to use that knowledge in the only way permitted by the conventions of her time. If her public and the taste of the day would have tolerated it, Miss Braddon could have made good use of a greater freedom. In nearly every one of her plots there is a situation which would normally have arisen out of, or would normally develop into, some sexual irregularity. But it never does. An unconvincing twist is given to the story, and the impermissible is avoided. But the novelist would obviously have had it otherwise. She knew the world, and that a smug insistence on maidenly virtue, manly continence, and general irreproachable domesticity was hopelessly at odds with the sort of actuality she pretended to describe. Unfortunately, while editors, publishers and public wanted stories of high life and crime, they would not stomach highlivers and criminals as they really were. So Miss Braddon, to whom the failings of human nature were interesting because they were human and perforce to be accepted even though they were failings, schooled herself to write thwarted sensationalism which did not at bottom make sense. She quickly learnt to give her worldliness just the right amount of play and to permit her heroines just the right amount of license. With a cynicism inevitable in so intelligent and experienced a woman, she blandly exploited the hypocrisy of a public she despised. Rather than permit a hint of sexual irregularity, she would falsify her own realism by explaining everything away and leaving virtue, if not triumphant, at any rate untarnished.

For her consolation—and to their own credit—an occasional

highbrow critic recognized her dilemma and allowed for it. *The Reader*, reviewing *Aurora Floyd* in 1863, wrote shrewdly:

Miss Braddon's novels have all the more merit in being clever that they belong to a class of sensation novels which on this side of the channel are written under difficulties. An English sensation novelist has no chance against his French rivals. His heroine may have two husbands but the marriage service must have been duly performed in each instance. She may lie, sob, forge, swindle and murder; but she must not commit the only crime over which a veil of sentiment can possibly be thrown. . . . We object to the assumption which runs through all our sensation romancers from Mr. Wilkie Collins downwards, that we can feel an interest in a woman who commits every breach of moral and divine law as long as she preserves her nominal purity.

This sacrifice to other people's prudery of an exceptional and inexhaustible talent for stories of human error is perhaps the unrealized tragedy of Miss Braddon's career. What might she have achieved, had fate not doomed her to live at a time when British puritanism and its taboos were more powerful than ever before or since?

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There remains for comment one element in her novels which distinguishes them from those of nearly all her best-selling contemporaries, and makes them of real value to any reader of to-day interested in the surface manners of high society during the last four decades of last century. She is a lavish, detailed and delightfully sub-acid commentator on the houses, gardens, furniture, amusements, affectations, food, clothes, social attitudes and general day-to-day deportment of the aristocracy, plutocracy and smart intelligentsia of her time. She does for mid-Victorian "fashion" what Mrs. Gore does for the "ton" from 1830 to 1850. In each novel of contemporary life is a picture, painted right up to the minute, of the sort of lives this, that or the other set were living, and the sort

of "act" they were careful to put on while doing so. This plentiful and amusing reportage is carried out with an engaging undertone of malice. The ostentation, purse-pride, snobbery, censoriousness and petty jealousies of the women; the selfishness, foppery and arrogance of the men—are brought out so indirectly yet so tellingly, that few at the time could identify the process and resent it, nor anyone to-day fail to enjoy it. One likes to think that Miss Braddon took her revenge in this way on a society whose shortcomings she knew only too well, whose sins she might not candidly reveal.

## POSTSCRIPT

A curious fragment of publishing history came to light in connection with *The Trail of the Serpent* (see above, p. 73), as a result of the discovery by Mr. Montague Summers in a Statutory Library of a copy of Maxwell's 1861 edition, the existence of which, although rumoured, had not previously been established. Hitherto it had been suspected that no edition had actually appeared in 1861, and that the first re-issue of Miss Braddon's first story was, in fact, a single volume in bright blue cloth, published by Ward, Lock & Tyler in 1866 and entitled *The Trail of the Serpent*, with no sub-title added. It is not surprising that this 1866 volume should have been so regarded, for the publisher's announcement dated July, 1866, to all intents and purposes declares it to be the first:

*The Trail of the Serpent* was written originally for serial publication. . . . In its serial form it was subjected to all the vicissitudes which can afflict a literary undertaking; but although always hastily and sometimes recklessly produced, the Novel was written *con amore*, with very little hope of fee or reward except the thrilling pleasure which the literary aspirant feels on seeing a first work in print. . . .

The work now reprinted has been carefully revised and in part re-written. . . . For what it is, the Publishers submit *The Trail of the Serpent* to the generous appreciation of both critical and non-critical readers.

It would be difficult, without saying so outright, to imply more definitely that the volume thus introduced was the first and revised reappearance of a story issued some years ago in serial numbers. Nevertheless, there has now been unearthed an edition dated 1861, also published by Ward & Lock, containing the same differences from the original Beverley text as appear in the edition of 1866, but with the original title *Three Times Dead* retained as sub-title.

Why should Ward, Lock & Tyler in their cloth issue of 1866 not merely make no mention of the board issue of 1861 but go out of their way to imply that no intermediate edition had appeared since the original publication in Beverley? A possible explanation was suggested by a document in my possession which had not hitherto had much meaning for me. This is a letter from John Maxwell to Empson of Beverley, written on the paper of the *St. James's Magazine* and dated 19th April, 1861. It says:

I bought and paid for the copyright of *The Trail of the Serpent*, taking at the time of my purchase a receipt and assignment from the Author, Miss M. E. Braddon, of No 20, High Street, Camden Town. I am wholly taken by surprise, therefore, at your claim, and will feel obliged if you will forward to a friend of your own in London any documents sustaining your position, etc., etc. . . .

Now suppose that Miss Braddon, not fully understanding her position *vis-à-vis* Empson or considering that he had defaulted from the contract which was therefore void (Mr. Summers has informed me that Empson not only asked her to cut her story by half and accept £5 instead of £10, but in fact never paid a penny beyond the 50s. given in advance), sold her copyright twice over. Suppose that Maxwell (on the staff of Ward & Lock and ignorant of the earlier basis of contract) arranged for the story to appear in 1861 under a new title, while rashly retaining the old one as a sub-title. Suppose that Empson saw this book, or an announcement of it, and challenged the new publisher's rights, provoking in reply

this letter from Maxwell. Is it not possible that when the two parties got down to brass tacks Empson was able to prove his case? The immediate result would be the withdrawal of the Ward & Lock edition of 1861, and a later development (the difficulty with Empson may or may not have been resolved in the interval), the cloth-bound edition of 1866, published without the original title and prefaced by a publisher's note suggesting that this was the first revival of a forgotten and anonymous story.

## I

RHODA, THIRD daughter of the Rev. Delves Broughton, was born on 29th November, 1840, near Denbigh in Wales. She lived for nearly eighty years, and died at Headington, Oxford, in June, 1920. Her long life was uneventful in the sense that it was spent in the privacy of various homes, was so conducted as to escape personal publicity, and comprised little in the way of travel or adventure. But if as a woman she was virtually unknown beyond her circle of personal friends, the name "Rhoda Broughton" on a title-page, or as a symbol of conversation of witty but alarming pungency, was almost a national institution. Her earlier novels horrified the censorious mid-Victorians and provoked anonymous reviewers to abuse; but they were eagerly devoured by those whom the moralists claimed to protect and the reviewers to influence. From 1878 onwards, when she first settled in Oxford and became a "figure" in the University's social background, her tart humour and incalculable candour produced a similar conflict of results. The starchy and the correct regarded her with severe, yet nervous, disapproval; while the rest delighted in the atmosphere of freedom which she created and in the swift brilliance of her talk.

Absurdly enough, both Rhoda Broughton's good reputations did her injustice. As a novelist she was not at her best in the books most talked of and still remembered; while her really satisfying because most spontaneous work passed with little comment and is now forgotten. As a member of society she was credited with advanced and dangerous opinions, for the reason that she had a talent for self-expression which startled by its outspokenness and irony. But in fact she was in the best sense conventional, a convinced believer in the traditional social order, and always conscious of belonging to an old and important family who, though they might have declined in

worldly estate, would perpetually remain a part of a ruling caste. Further, her heart was as warm as her manner was brusque and her tongue flippant, and personally she was as free from snobbery (though now and again her books read snobbishly) as only a person can be who takes her own good breeding for granted and lives according to its rules.

The published works of Rhoda Broughton—in quality, in the extent to which they won appreciation, and in their contact with the changing periods over which they were written—present a case of topsy-turviness which may fairly be termed unique in its kind. Her first novel appeared in 1867, so that for twenty-five years she wrote under the domination of the three-decker system in fiction-publishing. During those years she published the books which won her simultaneously a large public and the reproach of irreverence and immorality—the books by which she is still remembered. But no one of these books is a three-volume novel in anything but physical form. Rhoda Broughton was utterly unsuited to the writing of three-deckers, as became evident when from 1892 onwards she published one-volume stories—and short volumes at that. Probably hardly anyone nowadays has even heard of *Mrs. Bligh, Scylla and Charybdis*, *Dear Faustine*, *A Waif's Progress*, *The Game and the Candle*, *Mamma*, *The Devil and The Deep Sea*, while every fiction-conscious reader knows, at least by name, *Cometh up as a Flower*, *Not Wisely but Too Well*, *Goodbye Sweetheart*, *Nancy*, and *Belinda*. Yet the first mentioned group of novelettes (they are little more) are admirable specimens of feminine novel-writing—at once astringent, deeply sympathetic to the sufferings of women, subtly observant and deftly humorous—whereas the better known titles are either without any quality save a crude girlish vitality, or are forced to scatter their excellencies over a field too wide for them.

The unfortunate author was only too conscious of the tyranny of the serial and three-decker convention, but was forced to submit to it, in order to earn the larger payment which a full length fiction could command. She had to add ten chapters to *Cometh Up as a Flower*; she cried out against the publisher of *Not Wisely* for stretching the tale over three



volumes; it needed all Bentley's patience and ingenuity to space out *Red as a Rose is She*, *Goodbye Sweetheart*, *Nancy*, *Joan* and *Alas!* to the format required by the Circulating Libraries and by his author's needs for money. When depressed by a conviction that *Alas!* was a failure, she finally made up her mind to "forswear the 3 vol. novel", she made a good decision for the wrong reason. Although, as was undoubtedly the case, she lost some of her public when she became a writer of short novels, she found *herself*—and that surely is an author's prime achievement.

Paradoxically, then, Rhoda Broughton won abuse, financial profit and a name in literature by books inferior to those which earned her none of these things. But the contrariety goes further. Only with the help of the least known of all her little known works can the remembered ones be understood.

After her death, with a Foreword by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, there appeared a story called *A Fool in her Folly*. It tells in the first person the events of a few months in the life of a young girl. Presented as fiction and with a perfunctory novelized ending, it is nevertheless unmistakable autobiography.

*A Fool in her Folly* tells the story of Charlotte, who is given the run of the library at home and, unknown to her parents, reads Byron, *Tom Jones*, *Manon Lescaut* and a host of other "unsuitables". These (with *Guy Livingstone* as a secret bed-book) so inflame her romantic imagination that in all innocence she sets out to write a passionate novel called *Love*, treating of emotions and ecstasies of which she knows nothing save what she has read. The manuscript is discovered by a governess and betrayed to her horrified parents, who are the more horrified to find the girl unrepentant and convinced of her mission to bring a message of amorous rapture to the world at large. In deep disgrace "Char" is sent away on a long visit to the house of a distant aunt. There, after a chance meeting, she falls in love with young Drinkwater, a notorious local ne'er-do-well, and for weeks they carry on a clandestine and ardent love-affair. Char, entranced herself to be experiencing the fevers and languors of the heroine of *Love*, almost welcomes the evil reputation of her lover. With the faith of a crusader she tells herself that, cleansed by their mutual passion, he will

slough off his murky past and live the rest of his life in happiness and honour. But suddenly she is brutally torn from her fool's paradise by proof, in Drinkwater's own writing, that he is all of the blackguard they say he is. Not only has he merely been amusing himself with the "partridge plumpness" of the confiding girl; he has actually profited by her infatuation to regain access to her Aunt Florinda—an old love of his, now recently widowed, still young and still desirable. Poor Char is stricken to the heart and lies for three hours with her face in her bedroom carpet.

*A Fool in her Folly* is at once a microcosm of the earlier novels of Rhoda Broughton and a reversion to their very style, though avoiding the extremes of callow excitability which youthful inexperience permitted. Further, it had a curious forerunner in the little book she published in 1894 and called *A Beginner*. Here, also, a young girl writes a novel which appears anonymously and shocks or excites her acquaintance by the fervour of its love-scenes. There is obvious reminiscence in *A Beginner*, as well as touches of the flapper-vanity of the earliest novels; but although the book is a throw-back to the real past, it is a cynical, self-mocking one and its end is bitter and farcical. *A Fool in her Folly*, on the other hand, is neither mocking nor farcical. It is a deliberate plunge into the ardours and agonies of a distant youth, as though the old lady had faced up to her last ordeal and, with all her defences down, confronted herself as she once was and relived the tragedy which set its mark on her forever.

There can be no shadow of doubt that the ill-fated love-affair of Char and Bill Drinkwater is the love-affair of Nell and Dick McGregor in *Cometh Up*, of Kate and Dare Stamer in *Not Wisely*, and of Rhoda herself, in her excited book-stimulated teens, and some discreditable unknown. If this be granted, the slant of all her work is accounted for, and the feverish element in the first two novels seen to be natural and inevitable. The abandon of her heroines' love-making, which so scandalized the 'sixties, was too fresh in her memory to be tuned to period taste, and the heart-break of her deserted girls was, for all its exaggeration, written from experience and not imagined.

Further significant parallels of character and incident exist between *A Fool in her Folly* and other Broughton novels; but the book's essential importance lies in the picture it draws of the author's girlhood, in its revelation of the intensity and bitter disillusion of an unhappy passion, and in the explanation it offers of her caustic attitude to life in general and of her pre-occupation, as a novelist, with precocious young girls entangled in luckless love or loveless marriage, and with maturer women in whose past are shadows.

*A Fool in her Folly* was, as has been said, posthumously published; and it was natural to wonder whether the author had intended publication or had written the book as a private ventilation of a secret sorrow long and grievously borne. I was fortunate in having the opportunity of consulting, on this and other points, an old lady living in Oxford who had known Rhoda Broughton intimately, and kindly made enquiries among surviving relatives. The results were interesting. A nephew and a niece were both clear that the book had been "going through the press" (presumably that proofs were arriving) when Miss Broughton died. This would seem to establish the fact that publication had been arranged with her knowledge and consent, although I confess that I find it difficult to account for its Odhams Press imprint. From 1912 onward her publishers had been Messrs. Stanley Paul & Co. The Odhams Press, prominent in periodical publishing, was not a *book* firm of the kind with whom Miss Broughton would have been likely to be in touch.<sup>1</sup> But another nephew expressed a virtual certainty that in her later years Miss Broughton's stories were dictated to her confidential maid Pullen, and that late MSS. were therefore in Pullen's handwriting. After a search, this nephew unearthed the MS. of *A Fool in Her Folly* which proved to be entirely from the hand of Miss Broughton herself. The implication is that the novel was written some while before her death, put away and only sent to a publisher in the last months of her life. As her final illness was a protracted one, it is permissible to think that, with a courage both

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Odhams, to whom I applied for any information in their possession, most courteously searched their evacuated files. But no documents connected with this incident of over twenty years ago had survived, nor was there anyone still on the staff who might have remembered what occurred.

pathetic and admirable, she deliberately violated her own long-guarded privacy at a moment when she knew that, by the time it was publicly invaded, she would be beyond the reach of sympathy or curiosity or questioning.

## II

The Rev. Delves Broughton, for some years a widower, died in 1863, and his three daughters left Broughton Rectory in Staffordshire where their father had been both squire and parson. They set up house in Surbiton, whence not long afterward one of the elder sisters married and went to live at Ruthin in Denbighshire accompanied, apparently from the first, by Rhoda. In the middle 'seventies the married sister, Mrs. Newcome, lost her husband, and in 1878, with her sons and her sister Rhoda, settled at 29 Holywell, Oxford. For twelve years Mrs. Newcome and Miss Broughton remained in Oxford; and it is from this period that date the beginnings of the Rhoda legend and have survived the most numerous testimonies to her brilliant and provocative personality.

It must be remembered that, by the time she arrived in Oxford, Rhoda Broughton was already a novelist of notoriety. She had published five three-deckers, one two-decker, and a book of short stories. She had been praised by a few critics, but by many vilified to the point of insult.<sup>1</sup> She was troubled

<sup>1</sup> Here and there an intelligent voice was raised on her behalf. Andrew Lang (who had the courage to praise Miss Braddon and Gaboriau and wrote: "It is so easy to make oneself miserable without reading Russian novels that they are a mere extra expense like getting a stool to be sad on") dedicated to her his volume *Old Friends*. Gleeson White, in an anonymous book: *Letters to Eminent Hands* published in 1892, addressed a letter to Rhoda Broughton in which he said: "How scurvily we treat writers who enliven without instructing us! For bores who inflict speculative theology without mercy, or for those who give us stories without plot, humour or dénouements, we are unduly patient. But when a book genuinely delights us, and infringes the proprieties in a *risqué* but not too *risqué* way we add hypocrisy to ingratitude and affect to scorn it as flippant . . . As the sinfulness of little sins was a favourite text of a certain school of theologian, the tragedy of little worries is a note you invest with its rightful importance . . . It is not easy to find wherein lies the charm of your style. It is no doubt redundant in its slang, and in its perpetual use of the historic present peculiarly irritating; but the whole effect is so fresh and unaffected that we may waive minor offences in view of its frank directness . . . Historians of English fiction in the reign of Victoria will, one fancies, be compelled to consider your work more seriously than contemporary critics have done".

with painful and incapacitating eye-weakness, which combined with a genuine dread of reviewers' abuse to cause fits of almost morbid depression. But among her fellow-writers—particularly among the men—she had found several champions. Of these Anthony Trollope was perhaps the most impressive, being a man little given to exchanging compliments with his kind and temperamentally unresponsive to feminine eccentricity. In my biography of Trollope is printed a remarkable letter which, unsolicited, he wrote Miss Broughton from Washington in 1868. He had just read *Not Wisely* and was much pleased with it. Here is one paragraph:

I must tell you that I have heard that your stories were written in a strain not becoming a woman young as you are—not indeed becoming any woman. In the story I have read there is not a word I would not have had written by my sister or my daughter—if I had one. I do not understand the critics who, when there is so much that is foul abroad, can settle down with claws and beaks on a tale which teaches a wholesome lesson without an impure picture or faulty expression.

It is disappointing that the recipient of this generous and encouraging letter (a letter which is known at the time to have saved her from a mood of sullen defiance *vis-à-vis* her critics, and given her renewed self-confidence) should eight years later—in October, 1876—have written to George Bentley:

Frederick Locker told me how Ouida abuses my books . . . and how Anthony Trollope says I might have done something if I had taken pains. But then he never praises any writer except Thackeray, at least I never heard him.

That there was in her (as a young woman at any rate) an element of arrogance and ingratitude, her behaviour to her uncle Le Fanu will show.

Before accompanying Miss Broughton to Oxford, it is suitable to quote from a private letter written four years earlier by a young woman living in Derbyshire to a girl friend in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> This is, perhaps, the earliest direct description of Rhoda so far recorded, and it shows that even by 1874 the admired and reprobated novelist was definitely a public figure, and as much so among the sheltered female young as anywhere else.

Darling Bunnie, . . . Mama and Florence are coming home to-morrow, and on Saturday I expect I shall go with them to another of the Strutts' "At Homes", and I *believe*, I *hope*, I shall meet Rhoda Broughton there. She is going on Wednesday to Bridgehill to pay them a visit" . . . [Here is a delightful drawing of a book-stand containing a series of R.B.'s novels, *Nancy*, *Red as a Rose*, etc.).

A few days later:

Now I must tell you all about that "doo"—There were about 60 people I should think, roaming about between three rooms and the conservatory. The instant we got there Mrs. Strutt grabbed me and bore me off to talk French to a sweet Russian pounce [family slang for a nice-looking girl] who could not speak a word of English. We got on capitally and chatted for twenty minutes. I enjoyed it awfully. She is staying at Allistree and came with the Evans. I made friends with Charlie Boyd who is staying at Bridgehill. He joined in our conversation and spoke French so well, and then he took me off to tea and we pursued Rhoda Broughton together. He told me lots of things about her. She walked about in such a "strong-minded" manner, stared at people and talked loud, and showed by every look and action that she knew perfectly well that she was the most important person there. She is plain, strikingly dressed and about forty or rather under perhaps. Both Mr. Strutt and Charlie Boyd said they did not suppose for an instant she would go to church as she is utterly irreligious.

<sup>1</sup> This letter was kindly communicated to me in December 1940 by a niece of the addresser.

However, there she was next day, and while the others knelt with their faces covered, she sat with her chin on her hands staring about as hard as ever she could. That prim little Lizz "wonders they'll have her at Bridgehill". . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

That a considerable stir should have been caused by the appearance of the redoubtable Miss Broughton in the very centre of Oxford was natural enough. The *élite* of University society—a society as critical, contentious and envenomed as any in the country—went into battle, partly against the intruder, mainly against one another, and to the old lady already mentioned I owe these few stimulating details of the flutter and social cleavages which the conflict provoked.

Rhoda herself showed no more sign of bashfulness than she had done in Derbyshire four years earlier. Of short medium stature, she strode about the town followed by at least two (and usually more) pugs. She affected a severe though smart style of dress and, to judge from a photograph taken at this time, resembled a nice-looking undergraduate dressed to play a female part in an OUDS production. The important residents rapidly split into two parties—anti- and pro-Broughton. The leader of the "antis" was Miss Smith, whose brother was the professor of Mathematics and the Curator of the University Museum. Miss Smith was very influential in University circles. She was the first woman-governor of the Radcliffe Infirmary; her manner and appearance were as severe and repressive as her opinions; and her social influence was strongly on the side of convention and propriety. She lived near the Museum in the plump, rather engaging Ruskin-Gothic house still surviving in South Parks Road, which at that epoch backed on to a tennis court. All users of this court were compelled to wear jackets, lest Miss Smith from her windows should suffer the indignity of seeing them in *déshabille*.

Naturally this alarming lady lost no time in taking up a position with regard to the new-comer. Her attitude would, no doubt, in any event have been a hostile one; but it was

doubly hostile because she got into her head (and no one could ever convince her of her mistake) that the intruder-novelist was Miss Braddon and therefore, according to her belief, a woman of unsavoury past. She determined that from the highest circles of Oxford society Miss Br . . . . should be excluded, and so far succeeded that Rhoda was never recognized by those Heads of Houses who followed the lofty lead of the Dean of Christ Church and Mrs. Liddell. The wife of the Rector of Exeter (Mrs. Jackson) rather nervously compromised and showed an inclination to know Miss Broughton on suitable occasions, while Dr. Jowett treated her with great cordiality until the appearance of *Belinda*, when he rapidly cooled.

It is unlikely that the lady suffered greatly from this boycott by the Upper Ten. She had her champions and of a more congenial kind. These pro-Broughtonians were Walter Pater, the President of Trinity and Mrs. Margaret L. Woods, the Fred Morrells and Mrs. Mark Pattison. Inevitably, such more or less "advanced" personalities swayed corresponding undergraduate opinion. Invitations to 29 Holywell became more and more sought after by the senior highbrow young, among whom were noticeably Rennell Rodd and D. S. MacColl. [See Note, p. 116 below.]

It appears that their devotion was amply rewarded. From private information and printed testimony it is obvious that Miss Broughton's conversation was informed, brilliant and witty far beyond the ordinary. The obituary published in *The Times* in June 1920, said that it was "impossible to speak of her many and entertaining books without recalling at once that she herself could fill their place far more brilliantly. . . . She was always better than her books and with each year she softened, mellowed, gained in richness and breadth. . . . She became the centre of a band of the faithful who assembled to enjoy the rare crackle and savour of her talk. Her keen wit, her shrewd sense, her solid knowledge and love of literature all made it a memorable entertainment." In December 1940, Sir Charles Grant Robertson and "C. L. G." wrote to *The Times* stating (the former) that "her wit, her love of the best in



literature, and her penetrating judgments were a delightful education"; (the latter) that he "vividly recollected her kindly hospitality and animated conversation." It is important, in conjunction with these tributes, to quote for a third time my old lady who said to me "She never spoke of her past life and I, at any rate, was careful not to enquire about it."

On one point there is conflict between the evidence of personal friends and of the majority of her own letters. Virtually all the former state that she "set no store" by her books, was "utterly impatient of any solemnity on the subject of her work", "did not take her novels seriously". But her correspondence with Bentley gives a different impression, at any rate during her first thirty writing years. Certainly she was never pompous or sibylline; but neither was she indifferent, unexacting or willing that her work be treated at all lightly. Also the financial side of authorship was of genuine importance to her, and continually occupied her mind. There is evidence in her letters to Bentley of family responsibilities, and it seems likely that brothers and sisters frequently looked to her for help. If, then, she really gave the impression in conversation of setting no store by her books, the explanation is that she chose to affect a casual self-depreciation in public, and behind the scenes worked off her anxieties, ambitions and disappointments on her publisher. This attitude is not unknown among authors.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1890, Rhoda Broughton left Oxford and went to Richmond, where she lived for ten years; but in 1900 she was back again in Headington, on the hill above the University City, and there, with frequent intervals of travel and visiting, remained until her death. She was a woman of sixty when she returned to Oxford; and the tartness and (sometimes) unkind sarcasm, which undeniably had characterized her during her earlier more defiant period of residence, had mellowed into a bracing and generous plainness of speech,

<sup>1</sup> A partial explanation of this contradiction between friendly reminiscence and surviving correspondence may be that the former derives exclusively from the last few years of her activity as an author. As will be seen below, she did occasionally, in her letters to Macmillan between 1900 and 1910, shrug her work aside as *démodé* and imply that she herself was weary of it.

with a pleasant flavour of astringency and a basis of genuine knowledge of life as well as of letters. Many people are still alive who knew Miss Broughton at Headington, and none that I have met ever spoke of her without the affectionate respect due to a person of great distinction in her own right, yet natural, unaffected and perpetually herself.

### III

As a writer Rhoda Broughton is slapdash, often clumsy, and quite indifferent to the texture of her style. Her forte is dialogue, which she uses with suppleness, humour and unfailing freshness. In the early books she is forever quoting tags of poetry (an interesting symptom of a youth spent in wide desultory reading, but in itself infuriating), and she never wholly loses a tiresome tendency to magniloquent interludes of generalized reflection or descriptive high-falutin. But her faults of expression are easily forgiven for the sake of the brilliant understanding of humanity which, from *Nancy* (her fifth novel) onwards, is the very stuff of her books. She may be melodramatic and sentimental; she may revel in youthful deathbeds; she may continually shirk her own dénouements and scramble a story to a perfunctory ending in a Postscript. But she can paint the very hearts of girls and women, and with unfaltering skill catch and communicate to the spectator the shifting colours of their timidity or recklessness, their brave humility or cruel self-conceit. Girls in love, girls pert through shyness, girls sullen and coltish who suddenly melt into warmth and unselfish generosity; sisters in fond or hostile relationship; women rivals in love; sad lonely women hiding from the world; dowagers of every kind—the crowded gallery of Broughton female portraits contains hardly one that is not a living soul. With men she is less uniformly sure. Her young men (except in the full fever of love-making) are apt to be loutish or stiff or merely dull. With older men, however, she is increasingly successful; and as many of them have qualities in common with “St. John Delaval” (who is Aunt Florinda’s

faithful neighbour and friend in *A Fool in her Folly*) one is tempted to suspect that some real acquaintance of her early days served her as starting-point-model all her life.

\* \* \* \* \*

"One who knew her" contributed a brief reminiscence of Rhoda Broughton to *The Times* of 7th June 1920. In this he described the old lady's last protracted visit to London (in the winter of 1919), when she held a regular salon in the Chelsea drawing-room which had once belonged to Thackeray's daughter, Lady Ritchie.

Miss Broughton received each afternoon men and women belonging to every stratum of political, literary, and artistic society, while by her side lay all the newest novels and memoirs. . . .

It was interesting to recall when in that drawing-room, that what made Miss Broughton first write was reading Miss Thackeray's *The Story of Elizabeth*. Hearing that it was the work of a girl not much older than herself, she asked herself why she should not write a book too, and one wet Sunday afternoon, having grown rather tired of her Sunday book, *Elijah the Tishbite*, she took an old French copy-book and began to scribble.

Never shall I forget the rapture of that first fit of composition!" she once exclaimed. "I wrote *Not Wisely but too Well* in six weeks, being in a state of great excitement the whole time". She did nothing with the MS. for two years, and then, being on a visit to her uncle by marriage, Sheridan le Fanu (author of *Uncle Silas*, perhaps the grimmest tale in English fiction) she read two chapters aloud to him. At once he exclaimed, "You will succeed, and when you do, remember that I prophesied it!"

*Not Wisely*, therefore, (something of an ugly duckling among Anne Thackeray's gentle brood) was written in 1862 or 1863 by a girl of about twenty-two. Le Fanu, a conscientious and practical man, was not content merely to encourage his clever

niece. He gave her a first-class serial opening and an introduction to a leading London publisher, from which flying start she never looked back.

On 2nd August 1865, Le Fanu wrote from Dublin to George Bentley, calling attention to *Not Wisely but Too Well* which was starting serial in the current number of the *Dublin University Magazine*, at that time owned and edited by himself.

It is a *first* tale (he wrote) and I think of so great promise and power as to induce me to believe the young authoress will be ultimately a great success.

On 21st April of the following year he wrote again:

I have a *very* high opinion of *Not Wisely* and have written to the author to revise it—which it greatly wants. That done I have *great* confidence in it.

When, however, a few weeks later he sent Bentley the complete revised text, he received in return a shocked and highly unfavourable report from the publisher's reader toward which, in view of his previous enthusiasm, he showed a curious submissiveness. On 6th July 1866, he wrote:

Many thanks for your frank letter. I am not authorised to act for the writer, but have communicated. I am of course very sorry that the critical examination should have resulted so unfavourably. But my impression respecting the cleverness and powers of the writing is very strong. Your critic's decided feeling against the tone and subject of the tale has, I hope, told upon the general estimate he makes and which includes other points. I was intending to write to you to-day advising your sending back to the author the *last* scene—for remodelling and careful revision—as on reading it I am satisfied it would not do.

Could you recommend any publisher likely to take the work up in the event of the author agreeing to withdraw it?

I ought to say that the writer's baldness of style and description (objected to) arises from an unfortunate ignorance of the actual force of some of what is set down and of the way in which the world—wiser in the knowledge of evil—might read it.

It will be observed that the tentative excuse offered in the last paragraph for Miss Broughton's outspokenness is precisely the one she herself offers when Emma Jocelyn in *A Beginner* and "Char" in *A Fool in her Folly* commit a similar transgression. It should also be noted that the novel underwent drastic revision between serial and book-issue.

Three weeks later, on 28th July, Le Fanu again writes to Bentley, and in a tone which suggests that the publisher, though wilting under his reader's moral indignation, was personally well disposed to the new author.

PRIVATE

My dear Sir,

I have communicated with the author of *Not Wisely* and strongly urged the expediency of withdrawing the book seeing the very strong view which your critic had taken respecting its tone—a view not unlikely to be that of many of the reviewers. She will consent to substitute a story which she has written and now coming out in the *University Magazine* entitled *Cometh up as a flower*. You will see that it is perfectly free from the particular objection urged against the other. I do not think when finished it will make more than 1 volume, but you could in the agreement say "one or two vols."

Our friend [Percy] Fitzgerald talked with me twice lately about it. I merely said that I had advised the author to postpone it, at which he expressed strong regret and his conviction that the work would be a *success* and might be a *great* one. I merely mention this as a counter poise to adverse criticism. But looking on *your* critic's opinion as a foreshadowing of what some of the reviews might say, and considering how peculiarly painful such a view of the work would be, I thought it right to advise her distinctly to withdraw it.

Pray do not say more to *any* one respecting its postpone-

ment than that your adviser thought its tone bolder than might generally suit family reading, and that, having referred the doubt to the author, the book was withdrawn. If you agree, will you kindly let me have the agreement *here at latest on Wednesday* 1st of August, as I shall have to start next morning for Beaumaris.

By the autumn of 1866, Rhoda Broughton was herself in touch with Bentley. She has to add ten chapters to *Cometh Up* to make it long enough for serial and on 30th December 1866, sends the expanded text to London. Her letter has a sting in its tail:

Hoping that *this* tale may avoid offending your reader's *delicate* sense of propriety.

The novel appeared anonymously in March 1867, with a dedication to Le Fanu "as a token of affectionate regard", and the authoress began writing letters of lamentation over unfavourable reviews, a practice she indulged in for many years and one which must have sorely tried George Bentley's patience.

Meantime the revision of *Not Wisely* has been going forward, and it is understood that Bentley will consider the novel in its expurgated form:

I have been looking over it (she writes in the summer) and quite agree with you as to its unfitness for publication in its present state. I will do my best to expunge all the coarseness and slanginess and re-write those passages which cannot be toned down.

When at last he received the MS., Bentley offered £250 on condition that the book was expanded to make three volumes. (The price paid for *Cometh Up* is not on record, but one may guess it was £150, as in October 1868, Miss Broughton complained she had only had £170 all told from it and that even the one-volume edition seemed unprofitable. This pessimism was premature.) The offer and the condition attached were rather tartly rejected:

August 25th 1867.

I am not by any means inclined to let *Not Wisely* go for the very small sum you mention; add to which I have not the slightest intention of spoiling the story by padding it out to three volumes. We will therefore if you please say no more on the subject.

Less than a month later she has met Tinsley and come to terms with him. She writes to Richard Bentley, George's son:

Sept. 20th 1867.

I am sorry to say that your father and I have been utterly unable to come to an agreement about *Not Wisely*. He offered me £250 for it and insisted on my padding it out to a three-vol. novel. The price, tho' very small, I should probably have accepted, as everybody tells me that the sale of my two books is materially injured by the fact of their having appeared beforehand in the *Dublin University Magazine*. But I could not make up my mind completely to spoil my tale for the sake of a little additional profit to your father. I have consequently been compelled to make an agreement with Mr. Tinsley for it. If Mr. Bentley is inclined to give me a good price for some future work perhaps we may be able to come to terms.

At this juncture she must also have written to poor Le Fanu a discourteous letter which hurt his feelings. Clearly she was in a mood to blame the D.U.M. serialization for all her troubles, and was quite capable of expressing herself with churlish asperity. On 23rd September 1867, Le Fanu wrote to Bentley:

Miss Broughton seems to [think] that my advice is simply impertinent and I have got "my head in my hand" accordingly. Mr. Russell, *The Times* correspondent, she tells me introduced her to Mr. Tinsley, and that she has concluded an arrangement (*what* she does not say) for *Not Wisely* with him. Her note reached me this morning, and I have written acknowledging it and quite resolved to trouble her with no more advice in literary matters. I could not have anticipated such an answer as I have had.

So far as we know he kept his word, and makes no further appearance in the writing career of his temperamental niece. *Not Wisely* came out in the autumn of 1867, as "by the author of *Cometh Up as a Flower*", carrying no dedication, and after all expanded to three volumes!

This, then, is the story of Rhoda Broughton's rather perplexing literary début, and explains why two novels by her appear in one year and with different publishers. Tinsley's acceptance of what was at the time manifestly an isolated book without a "follow" was curious. In 1869 he approached her with an enquiry for another novel, and his interest had the effect of increasing Bentley's offer for *Red as a Rose is She* by £100. But he makes no further appearance in her correspondence with Bentley. I suspect that he took *Not Wisely* to please Le Fanu, the first of three novels by whom he published in the same year (1867).

From *Red as a Rose* onward Rhoda Broughton remained (with trifling exceptions) with Bentley and with Macmillan (as Bentley's successors) until the last three of her books to appear. She continually threatened to go elsewhere, but every time either won her point or herself retracted the threat. She was an emotional author to deal with, and her letters reflected her every mood; but she was loyal, fundamentally sensible, and her bark was worse than her bite.

\* \* \* \* \*

It says much for Le Fanu's perceptive judgment and freedom from period-prejudice that he recognized talent and an embryo best-seller in the author of Miss Broughton's first two stories, for they are more than usually crude examples of the type of first novel which unites pertness and conceit with technical incompetence. As has been seen, both almost certainly re-tell the same incident in their author's life and, as stories, are very similar. Even the trimmings are merely variations of one another. In *Cometh Up* the heroine's elder sister is selfish and heartless; in *Not Wisely* she is (until near the end) motherly and sweet. In *Cometh Up* the girls have a



father, and "Sweet Nell" gushes intolerably over darling Daddy, to whom at one point she actually refers as "the author of my being"; in *Not Wisely* they have a stuffy old uncle and aunt, and "saucy Kate" is very ill-natured and snobbish about them. Both Nell and Kate have reddish brown hair and a wide mouth, belong to an aristocratic family in decayed circumstances and are very sarcastic about the habits and tastes of tradespeople and the small bourgeois generally. Both Nell's lover "Dick McGregor" and Kate's lover "Dare Stamer" are army officers (the latter is once apostrophised as "Bellona's son"), whose physical attractions are more eagerly dwelt on than in the average fiction of the period. Nell's love-story founders on her forced marriage to Sir Hugh Lancaster, a rich middle-aged suitor, who would never for an hour have tolerated her shrill rudeness and unconcealed dislike for him. Dick pays her an evening visit in her husband's absence. There is a final deluge of emotion and he goes out into the night. Kate's love-story comes to grief because Dare is a "bad lot" who bets on horses, drinks and has a wife already. He asks her in so many words to run away with him, and the shock is so great that she moves to "Queenstoun" near London, takes up good works and distributes bibles in the slums. At the end Dare determines to capture her even against her will, drives hell for leather to a county ball where she is dancing, is thrown from his cart at the door of the Assembly Rooms and dies in her arms. In both books there are death-beds and to spare. Daddy dies in *Cometh Up*, and even Nell herself (although the tale is in the first person and has many references to long sad experience and the trials of old age) dies after three years of Sir Hugh Lancaster and at the age of twenty-two! In *Not Wisely*, Mother dies (off-stage); also Dare; also James Stanley, the saintly little slum parson; while Kate is continually wishing to do so and wasting to a shadow for her thwarted love.

Absurd, utterly absurd, both of them. And yet—with all their callowness and snobbery and silly ostentatious swagger, with all the French words and tags of verse and rhetoric and overwhelming egotism which make one feel like a Victorian

parent and want, after giving the girl a sound smacking, to lock her in her room—the books are alive. If they have the rawness and sham-cleverness of youth, they have also its freshness.

And they sold—especially *Cometh Up*, of which 2,500 copies were produced in the year of publication and a further 8,000 by 1874, and on the strength of which Bentley paid £700 for the copyright of the young woman's third story.

*Red as a Rose is She* shows a considerable improvement on its two predecessors. As a book about *people*, it is not very absorbing; but it has suppleness, wit and the beginnings of wisdom. There are still high falutin interludes and forced emotional generalizations; there is yet another youthful death-bed; but these are more than counter-balanced by the admirable love-scenes, the vignettes of minor characters and the frequent verbal felicities—many of which may well have alarmed the propriety of contemporary matrons.

In summer time most women like to have a lover; in winter the fire is lover enough for any one.

I only saw a pair of legs. How could I tell whether they were young or old legs?

Miss Blessington looks rather shocked. . . . and indeed at the rate of purity at which we are advancing *legs* will soon walk off into the limbo of silence . . . *arms* will probably follow them and then noses.

Mrs Tomkin's main hope [at the Bazaar] is in her sister, who with a dog-collar round her waist to demonstrate its tenuity and two long uncurled curls, vulgarly known as "Follow me, lads", floating over her fat shoulders, has been kissing strawberries and selling them at half a crown apiece.

The author (and no wonder) was much annoyed to find that the printers had censored her text, changing "for God's sake" into "for pity's sake", and making other verbal alter-

tions of the kind. She wrote to Bentley continually during serialization, bewailing the book's failure ahead of publication, shivering in advance at the thought of bad reviews. She wanted to dedicate it "To my Enemies, all and sundry", but the publisher dissuaded her. When at last the three volumes were out she wrote:

March 8, 70

Delighted with *The Times*: surprised at mildness of *Athenæum*'s abuse. I am sure I don't recognise old Jewsbury's pen dipped in vinegar and gall. Last time they reviewed me they said:

'we will not pollute the pages of our magazine with any more quotations from this blasphemous and obscene production.'

*Red as a Rose* proved even more popular than *Cometh Up* (during its first seven years 11,250 copies were called for as against 10,500 of the earlier book), and for *Good Bye Sweetheart*, the first story to appear as by "Rhoda Broughton", the purchase price rose to £900. This agreed, she settled to the job of writing the novel, sending her publisher frequent bulletins.

I am getting on slowly. The tale when completed will form a 1 or perhaps 2 vol. novel. I am resolved never to write a 3 vol. again [late 1870]. I mean to put my name to it for the first time. So many people claim my stories, I may as well assert my own right to them. (Mar. 27/1871.)

With this story began what became a recurrent pother about the title, as to which she was apt to show a tendency to pretty sentiment, unexpected in one so downright and so mordant. The book was originally to be called *Morning, Noon and Night*. On 30th March 1871 Bentley received this letter:

Ruthin

Of course I don't wish to adopt a title that you evidently dislike so much, but my friends abuse *Goodbye Sweetheart* so heartily that I had for peace sake to give it up. Lord Lytton's *Night and Morning* is a grave objection, but

you see my story is divided into three parts, respectively headed MORNING, NOON AND NIGHT. I can however substitute as a title for the whole *Life's Little Day* if you prefer that. I myself think it pretty, but surely the title, whether good or bad, can't matter much: generally the trashiest books have the most attractive names and what can be more untempting than the dry stiff titles of Miss Austen's masterpieces?

Again on 1st April, and still from Ruthin, she wrote:

*Goodbye Sweetheart Goodbye* let it be then, and do announce it as such immediately, before I have time to change my mind again. I always thought it a pretty, tender little title.

Again on 13th April:

I see you have announced it as merely *Goodbye Sweetheart*. I must beg for the second "Goodbye" as I think the title is incomplete, it being, as I suppose you know, the name of a song.

But the publisher declined to reinstate the second "Goodbye" and the novel appeared in book form in April 1872.

Although its initial sales were not quite so good as those of its predecessor, Bentley offered £1,000 for Miss Broughton's next story—and for book rights only, as she stipulated that this novel should not be serialized. Consequently, when *Nancy* appeared in October 1873, she had been spared the tortures of *Temple Bar* issue, which provoked opinions from friends and strangers with each instalment. Once more there was title trouble. She wanted *Sweet Nancy* ("it is so much prettier"); then she wanted *We Kissed Again with Tears* ("it is out of one of Tennyson's lovely songs"), but Bentley protested against the length. Finally came a complete volte face:

Aug. 24/73. Ruthin

Do not think me very troublesome, but my friends—those especially whose opinion I most value—dislike so *extremely* the new title, and think it will give such occasion

to the adversary to blaspheme, that if you do not mind we will go back to *Nancy*. Everybody likes it, and I like it myself. The tale is so extremely simple that I think a simple name suits it. Please do not make any more objections to it.

The book came out, and the author's foreboding of failure and fears of hostile criticism are dashed off to the publisher.

Nov. 4/73

I wish so much that you had looked over *Nancy* in the proofs, then I could have made the abbreviation you think desirable before it came out at all, and the poor little book would have had a better chance. I knew you would not like it as much as *Goodbye*, but I suppose one cannot always be at one's best. If I ever write another—which I certainly shall *not* do if *Nancy* is a dead failure (an event that I think far from improbable)—will you promise me to look it over *before* it comes out? I will cut out everything you like in the 6s edition, and heartily wish I could withdraw the whole book. If it is a dead failure, tell me so without blinking the disagreeable fact. I had rather know the truth.

Nov. 28/73

The *Pall Mall* is most unfair. Is not it singular that *Nancy*, so much the purest in tone and so much the most inoffensive of my stories, should be more violently reviled than any of its predecessors? I positively *dread* the *Saturday*. I cannot get used to the coarse and indiscriminate abuse with which I am belaboured. To my dying day it will make me wince. It is so bitter not to be able to answer: to sit under their gross unfairness—their flagrant misrepresentations. Tell me honestly whether the sale of the book is seriously affected, or whether it will weather the storm. I am sick of the whole thing, and have half a mind never to put pen to paper again. Yours in great depression and discomfort.

*Nancy* is not only a fine recovery after *Goodbye Sweetheart*, it is also her best book to date. As it deals considerably with the

miserable embarrassments, the blurtings and the inarticulacies of youth, it can more easily be compared with the author's two first books than can the more-maturely-peopled *Red as a Rose*. Such a comparison shows that Miss Broughton, though ill at ease in the wide spaces of three-deckedom, is on the way to finding herself. She presents pert, crude, suddenly shy young girls; family ragging; half quarrels which are a blend of giggles and rage, without a trace of the bumptious defiance of six years earlier, while her social scenes are at once suave, rapid and very funny. Near the beginning is an excellent dinner party, seen through the bored eyes of youth; near the end another, which for speed and impudence is startling for the period, and contrives to make one laugh at the heroine's conversational adventures with a deaf old gentleman, while keeping one conscious of the sullen background of jealousy and the haggard angry figure of Algy drinking. Constructionally the book is poor. Construction (save in one or two of the later short novels) was never Miss Broughton's forte. She was too impatient, too much of a rattle, to build a careful plot. But *Nancy* is tidied up with more than usual haste. The various bits are swept away into a box; Barbara, for no very apparent reason, dies in an odour of sanctity; and the Huntley-Musgrave love-muddles are declared solved in a couple of paragraphs.

Two years after *Nancy* came *Joan*—a melodramatic, rather snobbish story, which produced one of the author's periodical "farewells to fiction".

Have you seen the very Billingsgate paragraph about me in *The World*? (she wrote on 24th September 1876). Mr Yates never misses an opportunity of throwing dirt at me. It makes me hate the whole thing and I am almost resolved—and I may say quite resolved to withdraw after *Joan* from the arena.

But *Joan* also produced something less usual—a writ for £20,000 from Messrs. Gilbey for a libel on their sherry. The book came out on 30th October; the writ was issued on 3rd November. The sale was stopped; a cancel printed during

the night and inserted early next morning by employees of Bentley's binders who, for the purpose, visited the principal libraries as well as the publisher's warehouse. By the afternoon of 4th November the book was on sale again; and Messrs. Gilbey, persuaded that the offending words were mere carelessness, ultimately withdrew their claim and accepted an apology. Poor Bentley must have been driven nearly mad; but Miss Broughton's comment on her own reckless blunder was only: "What a tiresome check to the sale the recalling of the copies already issued must have given."

Negotiations over *Second Thoughts* occupied 1879. Bentley offered £1,200 for three volumes, but only £750 for two. The book could not be stretched beyond two volumes, so she accepted the latter sum, though reluctantly:

Dec 19/79

I am much exercised in mind at what everybody is telling me about my folly in selling my books at once out and out, and of the much larger sums that writers with half my sale realise by selling advanced sheets to America. It seems hard that such a comparative beginner as Miss Laffan<sup>1</sup> should make, as she sent me word a few days ago, much more money by her stories than I. I give no credence to the tale, though Miss Mathers herself gives it out, that she got £3000 by *Green Sleeve* [*My Lady Greensleeves*]. I do not think I am very mercenary but I do not like the idea of being given the go-by in price by people not half as much read as myself.

The novel came out in May 1880, and in July she wrote sarcastically, presumably on the strength of a review:

I am unaffectedly glad our Mathers disapproves, since it is a guarantee she will not coarsely copy what she despises. Evidently Helen Mathers was a good deal on Miss Broughton's mind, for in October she sends Bentley a brief note:

Miss Mathers is going to edit a magazine! and in November a postscript says: "Send me word what *you* think about Mathers and her trash."

<sup>1</sup> May Laffan, author of *Hogan, M.P.*, *The Hon. Miss Ferrard*, etc.

This cannot have been an easy question for Bentley to answer. Although he and Helen Mathers were to quarrel two years later (when she accepted the editorship of a rival to *Temple Bar* and deliberately chose *The Burlington* as the title) at this date (1879) he still had grateful memories of *Comin' Thro' the Rye* and *Cherry Ripe*, both of which stories had been very popular.

*Second Thoughts* was not a success; and the chagrined author is rather pathetically jaunty. Thus, in June:

I have a story in my mind that I thought of before *Second Thoughts*, but it seemed too risqué. However, since the public like it hot and strong, I am not the person to disoblige them. They shall see that there is life in the old dog yet. To a public accustomed to absinthe, ginger beer is naturally not palatable. This profound reflection is inspired by the reception of my latest work.

And in September:

*Second Thoughts* has got a ridiculous little new public of its own. I find it is read aloud by Calvinistic clergymen to their families!! Such is life!

And finally in November:

I am much struck with the new public I am setting up. I hear from his daughter, Mrs Butcher, that Archbishop Trench has been reading *Second Thoughts*! Fancy my solacing an Archbishop's leisure!

The "follow" to *Second Thoughts* was *Belinda*, one of the best known of Rhoda Broughton's novels on account of its (mainly) Oxford setting and well-canvassed personalities. It is a pity that this waspish and fundamentally absurd story should have enjoyed the notoriety which a *roman à clé* (and particularly a *roman à clé* concerned with the self-conscious and, even in those days, over-publicized world of academic Oxford) is liable to achieve. Not only is it Broughton as her enemies conceived her, but also it was based on a wife's disloyal ridicule of her husband. Likely enough Mrs. Mark Pattison was (as my old lady told me) gay, pretty, fond of cheerful company and frequently encouraged by her doctor to winter out of Oxford. Likely enough Mark Pattison was



stingy over money and temperamentally difficult. But it is curious that, after she became Lady Dilke, the ex-Mrs. Pattison could endure the Thames Valley at Weybridge all the year round; and it is certain that she talked to Miss Broughton of her trials and that the latter made a novel of them.

*Belinda* is in places a very amusing novel; the two sisters—Sarah and Belinda—are crisply, though unaffectionately, characterized, and the preposterous Miss Watson with her red face, grizzled fringe and black and white plaid gown is excellent caricature. But the central episode of the whole story—Belinda's marriage to Professor Forth—is not truly accounted for. *Why* did she marry him? All the talk about a marriage of minds would only sway an idiot, and that Belinda certainly is not. Consequently her later unhappiness is the natural outcome of her own folly, and the laments over her husband's shortcomings (which were obvious from the first) should justly take the form of self-reproach rather than self-pity. This failure to convince at a vital point of her novel was, of course, due to Miss Broughton's wish so far as possible to "fictionize" her friend Mrs. Pattison. Had she kept to the facts from the beginning, Belinda would have been the daughter of an Oxford Bank Manager of modest means, a girl who wrote books about French painting in order to earn a little pin-money, and one who would naturally jump at an academic alliance of some distinction, and gladly shut her eyes to the manifest foibles of her future husband.

*Belinda* earned £1,000 for her author, and before she was finally christened was successively named *Miss Watson's Victims*, *By a Hair's Breadth*, *The Professor of Etruscan* and *Professor Forth*. A disappointing subscription from Mudies and one or two early reviews provoked the usual pessimism.

Nov. 19/83

The *Belinda* a/c. is dismal (wrote Miss Broughton). Suppose Mudies only took such a small number because of *Second Thoughts* unpopularity, so that poor *Belinda* has not only her own but her predecessor's sins to answer for. I can't help attributing my declining popularity in some measure to fashion. I think my style of novels has gone

out of vogue. The world resents being amused without being improved too, and I have never laid claim to be improving. Well, during our sixteen years connection the public has been very kind to me, so I must *not* grumble, that like many other dogs I have had my day.

But more favourable notices and praise from Lord Houghton and the editor of *The Fortnightly* soon cheered her up.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the background of malicious gossip which damages one's appreciation of *Belinda*, the crowded social canvas of *Doctor Cupid* is a welcome relief. This novel is another and a better *Nancy*. The love-story has the freshness so noticeably lacking from *Belinda*, and the alternating happiness and misery of the heroine are beautifully conveyed. There is also evidence of careful design in the skilful series of social mischances which occur, and for once the incidents of the novel are as delicately interwoven as the moods of the characters.

It is amusing to learn that Bentley queries the propriety of the song sung by Betty Harborough at Lady Roupell's party—the words of which are supposed to be spoken by a husband just off to the wars:

“Oh! who will press that lilywhite hand  
When I am far away?  
Some other man!”

(Two more lines in the nature of a chorus follow, but they are so drowned by a roar of applause that Peggy can't catch them.)

“Oh! who will kiss those ruby lips  
When I am far away?  
Some other man!”

(Again the two drowned lines.)

“Oh! who will squeeze the little waist?”  
etc.

"Oh! who will pay those little bills?"  
etc.

Peggy rushes from the drawing-room at this point. ("She cannot stand it any longer; it makes her sick"); so further verses, if any, are not recorded. Miss Broughton's defence is queerly solemn, and is welcome as giving us the two final lines to each verse which she agreed must be suppressed.

April 28/86

As to the song, it was sung to an enthusiastic circle of ladies and gentlemen of the first fashion by Lady Randolph Churchill at Sir Arthur Bass' house in Scotland. Lady Bass, whom no one has ever accused of the faintest tinge of fastness, being present. I should be very sorry if you thought yourself obliged to truncate it; as I think it is telling in the way of heightening Talbot's misery by the contrast between Lady Betty and Peggy. Would not it suffice to put a footnote stating that the song is a genuine one, sung by a great lady at a smart country house?

And three days later:

I am afraid you are right about the general public, so

"Catararan

Dont care a d——"

dear as they are to my heart, must go! . . .

Her last three-decker, *Alas!* was at the same time the most highly-paid and least successful. She received £1,300, and a presentation copy of *David Grieve* with Mrs. Humphry Ward's "grateful acknowledgment of the pleasure got from the reading of *Alas!*" But there satisfaction ended. The book hung fire in the Libraries; and its failure goaded her yet once again (this time she kept her word) to write no more full-length fiction. She writes to Bentley on 17th November 1890, that she senses by his silence that *Alas!* has failed, and adds:

This is certainly due to its innate dullness, but partly also to the fact that my stories are going out of fashion; a fate which must overtake all but the very best writers, and

with my over 20 years of popularity, I cannot complain. I think I shall henceforth forswear the 3 vol. novel.

Two years later, with *Mrs. Bligh*, began her last and best period, as a writer of witty, perceptive and suitably proportioned social novelettes. There are twelve of them (excluding *A Beginner* and *A Fool in her Folly*) and though they vary in excellence, there is not one which may not claim to be a contribution to the history of manners. These little books are cameos of changing fads, fashions and furies, and deserve a permanent place in the honourable tradition of polite social fiction written in English.

Their publishing history—in the nature of things simpler than that of their predecessors—presents a few points of interest.

It is difficult to read, without a slight gasp of amused surprise, a letter she wrote in April 1899, to Macmillan, in response to some cuttings he had thoughtfully sent her about *The Game and the Candle*. After asking that no more cuttings be sent, she says:

I have all through my literary life tried to avoid seeing the reviews of my stories, and I think no object is gained by reading notices so contemptuous as those you enclose.

In the matter of terms, and despite the defeatist attitude she now tended to adopt toward her work, it is noteworthy that her earning power remained, *pro rata*, very nearly what it used to be. Certainly she dropped from the figure paid for *Alas!*; but that novel, as has been seen, was overpriced and did not pay its way. Throughout the Macmillan period, however, she never received less than the equivalent of £750 for the book rights alone of a three-volume novel, and usually more. This slight and gradual falling off of her market-value is in striking contrast to many long-lived novelists (for example Ainsworth and even Trollope), who in their prime commanded large sums but gradually sank almost to token-payments.

For *Lavinia* (1902) she had £350 for serial and book rights. The publisher undertook to try and get for her more than the £60 offered in America; but, although grateful, she was pessimistic. "I am perfectly aware you can't *force* a Public to

read a writer it is tired of. . . . If I have ceased to be read in America, of course you can't expect them to give much."

For *A Waif's Progress* (1905) Macmillan offered £450 for serial and book rights or £300 for book rights alone. She considered the story unsuitable for serial and, when he agreed, wrote on 21st January 1905:

I thought you would take my view. I do not care enough about the story to object to it being altered, but I think that it could not be toned down enough to meet the requirements of the Magazine without losing whatever point there may be in the girl's character. . . . I shall cut out or modify various crudities, even in book form.

*Mamma* (1908) brought her another £300; and *The Devil and the Deep Sea* (1910, her last Macmillan novel) £250. In a letter concerned with this story, she made an interesting general confession, which could with advantage be taken to heart by the numerous authors apt to judge their prospects and upbraid their publishers on the strength of the complimentary chatter of a small circle of friends.

June 15, 1910.

Your letter has made me feel uncomfortably that I have given you a wrong impression as to my attitude toward my own stories. No one can be more surprised than I that anyone can be found to read them after I have been scribbling for over 40 years. What astonished me was that *The Waif's Progress*, which I had fancied absolutely still born, should have sold better than *Mamma* which a good many of my friends seemed to like. It only shows how little one's own small circle can be taken as a criterion of the opinion of the general Public.

After *The Devil and the Deep Sea* she changed her publisher, and information is lacking about her final phase.

\* \* \* \* \*

To attempt analysis of stories as brief and intuitive as those of her one-volume period would be to break butterflies on a

wheel of pedantry. They have certain general features which recur. Coincidence creates a dilemma; and a girl or a youngish woman faced with a dilemma is ideal material for Miss Broughton's cool yet sympathetic talent. Or she introduces a woman of whose past life an epoch remains mysterious, and keeps the reader guessing what the mystery may be. Or, within the frame of exclamatory female friendship, she portrays gushing silliness or aggressive, short-haired, pseudo-masculinity or madcap pertness, or pathetic courage. Her love-stories are never smooth, and their occasional bitterness is strangely moving, as though the author herself, rather than the character she has created, were in agony of spirit. Also, only in connection with these little dramas of jealousy or masculine selfishness or feminine cruelty are we conscious of the reserves of her period. That she was susceptible to these reserves is especially striking in view of her fearlessness in writing dialogue, her moral detachment, her ruthless mockery of humbug and hypocrisy. But they are present in these books whenever there is an opportunity for them to make their influence felt.

This limitation on freedom of plot is Miss Broughton's only point of contact with the Miss Braddon she was once thought to be, and each in her different way paid the penalty. Perhaps Rhoda Broughton paid the more dearly of the two. Three volumes of sensational incident can end in unconvincing calm, and still leave excitement in the reader's mind; but short one-volume studies of intrigue or stolen happiness or heartbreak must come to their inevitable climax, if they are to achieve a completeness of design. As has been remarked earlier, her endings are apt to be botched or scrambled; and the reason is that she was unwilling (or did not dare) to carry her love-stories to the lengths of sexual irregularity which they obviously require. Only *A Waif's Progress* of these later novels ends satisfactorily—that is to say with a sharp, cynical and unexpected twist.

Yet despite this weakness, despite a few ingrained affectations, despite a tendency to unnecessary French phrases, trite generalizations and passages of stilted diction, these little books

show Rhoda Broughton to be that rare phenomenon—a genuine novelist. She creates character and keeps it consistent; she interprets with delicacy and unfailing humour the thoughts and impulses of quite ordinary members of the society of which she writes; she has an instinctive understanding of the conventions and social attitudes of her time, and uses them at will for comedy or for drama. Quick feminine perception, humour both demure and malicious, a genuine lack of moral indignation and an instinctive knowledge of the invisible antennæ which human beings put out toward others of their kind, entitle her to rank as one of the exponents of a contemporary scene, one of the chroniclers of human encounter and human mischance, whose work deserves to be remembered.

NOTE TO PAGE 93 ABOVE

After this book was in page proof I found among some letters, written to his parents by my father (Sir Michael Sadler) while he was an undergraduate, two interesting references to Rhoda Broughton. On 4th March 1883 he wrote home: "In the evening we all (he and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sidgwick) met again at Mrs. Woods, who was giving a party. Miss Broughton was there—Rhoda you know—the novelist. She was said to have come to Oxford to sketch University foibles, but has subsided into a quiet little house in Holywell where she produces a new book every other year. And everyone seems to know her—the right thing to say being 'She's so very much nicer than her books.' How this may be I don't know for I have never read any of them, but she struck me as a little hard and masculine in a long conversation I had with her. She asked me to go to tea with her on Sunday and, in hope of seeing her more kindly side, I accepted her invitation and am off when I have finished this letter."

This was written shortly before the appearance of *Belinda*, which story showed Miss Broughton to have imperfectly subsided. In October 1883 my father wrote home about this novel and reported on the authority of the author herself that Mark Pattison had called in Holywell and sent up his name as "Professor Forth."

V I L L E            D E            P R O V I N C E

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FOR THOSE in middle age, the smirch set on things remembered is among the hardest to support of the evils of this evil time. A litter of rubble already starred with weeds where was formerly a quiet corner of forgotten London: a house and garden, once cared for and welcoming, now commandeered and ringed with tangles of rusty wire, its fences broken, its windows blind with dust: the plastered walls and uneven planking of an old-fashioned and familiar chop-house, become a shattered façade and a space of pitted earth all-naked to the rain—these and a dozen others are sights which in this fifth year of war one can hardly bear, yet has to see.

But no less poignant are the memories of things one can no longer see—things which in moments of discouragement one fears never to see again. Of such—to me at least—are memories of France. For the first time since, in the intolerable sunlight of the May and June of 1940 the tidal wave of *Deutschum* humped over the frontiers and engulfed her, spewing its grey scum into every village street, I find it possible to look back. For although the memory of those days is weighted with the knowledge of the continued anguish of a starved and dauntless race, it is quickened now with the hope of retribution.

We have all of us, at one time or another, made fun of the late Austen Chamberlain for saying that he loved France like a woman (or words to that effect). Certainly the avowal was an odd one for a politician speaking in public; certainly also there was something comical in the conception of a lovelorn Chamberlain yearning through his monocle at the weeping but symbolic whiskers of the wily Briand. And yet, with the passing of time and the getting (maybe) of a little more wisdom, I find myself regretting my share in the mockery. If, as is very probable, the speaker meant something more subtle than his



words implied, then he voiced the feeling which I (and of course many others also) have long had for France and will continue to have until the end.

Can this feeling be analysed? Only partially. It consists of a sense of release; of a sudden freedom to be one's self because one is happy; of a complete harmony between one's surroundings and way of life and one's natural instincts; of a lively interest in every incident of every day; of chuckles provoked by trivial things—chuckles likely at any moment to flower in laughter. These sensations are all part of the delicious intimacy of an *amitié amoureuse* (something quite other than a love-affair); and as I know no phrase better able to express the relationship in which I personally have felt myself stand to France, I lay proud claim to it—undismayed by the fact that France has been totally oblivious of me. A purely one-sided ecstasy, in fact? Yes indeed; but none the less ecstasy for that.

And now it is finished, or at the best interrupted for many years. Let her lovers weep for France, whose graciousness and beauty and humour and (often enough) sinister fascination have, for the time being, gone down into darkness.

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To read, in June of 1940, of fighting in Senlis was like watching a buck-nigger snapping a girl's wrist across or a race-course gang making a latrine of Vézelay. Senlis, already brutalized in 1914, since restored to a wistful dignity and too certain of its traditions to be ashamed of a few ruins, had now to suffer all over again. And within an hour the invaders were at Chaalis and at Ermenonville and at Dammartin.

They might not be able finally to conquer the spirit of civilization, but they could scar and terrify it. The vision of any one of those gentle kindly little towns which lie in a wide ring round Paris smashed and straddled by mechanical force, made one physically sick. Now, over three years later, it is possible to look forward to the reckoning. Their tanks, their planes, their faultless equipment, the arrogant stupidity of their fanatical faces—all these will in time (perhaps in a short time) be execrated dust.

They were not worth, in human values, a single rack of the cheap gay clothing that used to hang outside the "Dames de France", a single tub of dusty evergreen on the terrasse of a hundred Cafés de Commerce, a single battered seat under the pollarded limes which drowse in front of an ugly Mairie and throw sulky shadows on a small untidy square.

They are those untidy little squares, those ugly Mairies, those seldom visited *villes de province*, which hold the secret of France. Paris has her own secret, but it is not the secret of France. Homage another time to Paris—though not to the smart Paris of the Parc Monceau, of the quarter from Kléber to the Bois, of the scatter of great hotels: nor to the hearty usher-on-holiday Paris of the Boulevards des Italiens and Capucines: nor the raucous American Paris of Harry's Bar, of the Rue Scribe and the Invalides. These, like the gold-tipped watering places on the Channel coast, the fashionable Riviera and the luxe-infested districts of the Basses-Pyrénées, are no more France than is Florida or the Argentine.

Homage another time to the sombre beauties of the Vosges; to the crags and flowery alps and water-loud valleys of the Dauphiné; to the melancholy marshes of Provence; to the townlets and forests and quiet enchantment of the Ile de France.

At this moment, compiling a nostalgic, a muted record of what there was of happiness between-wars, I am haunted by the image which holds in little all the rest. This is the provincial town, as from Montluçon to Toulouse, from Le Puy to Périgueux, it used to be; the ordinary provincial town, with its hinterland of fields and hills and woods, its open-air market, its lugubrious P.T.T., above all its *petit peuple*—humorous, shrewd, tenacious and essentially civilized. But not any one town. After what it has suffered and is still suffering, to evoke one particular place is to shatter the image in the pool. The town of which I write will be an amalgam of several, into which shall be poured something of the love I have for each of its components, something of the gratitude I have for the serenity and (there is no better, because no simpler word) for the *happiness* they have given me.

The day has arrived. I am going to France. Understand, please, that as a traveller I am as ordinary as my town. I have this much of holiday and I travel, by choice and for economy, by train. At a date long looked forward to, therefore, and at an hour scrupulously fixed, I reach Victoria.

The journey from London has stages as immutable as the seasons of the year. Victoria to Paris must just be endured, whether it be Dunkirk or Dieppe by night, Calais or Boulogne by day. If one travels rich, the Pullmans are piled with raw-hide suitcases, hat-boxes and golf clubs belonging to enamelled metallic women and flaccid men in fluffy shoes. If one travels poor, the train is a cross between a commercial hotel in the Midlands and a *pension* for distressed gentlefolk. Paris itself, on the way out, is merely an obstacle to be surmounted. To a near destination one escapes forthwith; but the journey to this *ville de province* is a long one, and for that, I take a night train from d'Orsay or from Lyons. It is not a very comfortable train and considerably crowded; but eventually at about 7 a.m. it arrives. The moment is at hand. Dirty and unshaven I emerge into the brilliant morning sunshine.

My *ville de province* is built on a sloping hill commanding unexpectedly, like the hill of Angoulême, a flat land of tillage. This hill is shaped like an elongated horse's hoof, high and steep at one end, sliding almost to plain level at the other. The railway station—a shabby affair with half a train-shed only (as though the contractor had lost heart and left one platform outside his scheme, from which a flat-roofed shelter on tall thin pillars excludes neither rain nor wind)—stands quarter of a mile from the lowest portion of the horse's hoof. From the dusty square outside the station (overlooked by a Café de la Gare, a Hotel des Voyageurs, a petrol-station and an inexplicable *quincaillerie*), a forlorn roadway, badly in need of repair, leads to the town. It is of course called Avenue Gambetta; and, as always, I feel a twinge of amused compassion for that eminent Frenchman who, thanks to an unlucky coincidence between his eminence and the development of the railway system, was doomed to give his name to the most desolate main thoroughfare of a hundred provincial towns.

Nevertheless, the first yard of Gambetta is also the first moment of unalloyed happiness. This is the France I have come to find, the France whose kindly indifference will in a very short time heal the fret of months of a working life. One look round is sufficient. Everything is as it should be. There are the untidy grass-grown tracks, the damp-stained plaster of the station buildings, the dusty lime trees in the square, the small iron tables outside the little café. A cheerful pigmy in a blue smock puts my bag on a barrow, and together we start up Gambetta toward the town.

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What the guide-book calls the "centre of animation" is the Place d'Armes. Here is one of the two principal cafés, the bookshop, the office of the local newspaper, the department store, what remains of the old Arsenal, the Church of St. Théodule and the Two Star Grand Hotel. Here also is a lot of noise; and I and my barrow press on to a quiet street running uphill toward the Cathedral, where is the Hotel du Cheval Blanc. This hotel is old-fashioned, ticketed "moins cher", and has no aspiration beyond "confort moderne", which means a wash-basin in the bedroom and taking the water-closet as you find it. My high-ceilinged, barely-furnished bedroom looks on to the clipped wall of trees enclosing the Cathedral garden. Already shadows are shortening in the courtyard beyond the window. When I am shaved and washed, when coffee and rolls have been put on the solitary table, when I have so manoeuvred the red-plush armchair (which wants a castor and moves reluctantly) so that I can sit and gaze at the golden green of the close-trimmed leaves with a glimpse of the warm reddish stone of the Cathedral above and beyond them, troubles and fatigues fall away and life, as I understand it, begins.

The Cathedral of this town is Gothic—most of it rather late Gothic, with a profusion of delicate carvings, pinnacles and buttresses. It is not a very important Cathedral, but, partly on account of its position and colouring, a very lovely one. Its western façade, which has no main porch or entrance in it,

looks down the hill with an air of reserve at once challenging and alluring. There are no towers flanking this façade, but behind it rises the great belfry, topped with an exquisite octagon elaborately traceried. The church stands magnificently; and to sit on the terrasse of the café below (not the chic café on the right where the motor-crowd go, but the townsfolk's café on the left) and to look up across the broad road and the cobbled area beneath the blank west front at the lofty and intricate beauty of the belfry, is to know such peace as even before the war one thought had vanished from the world.

And there is similar peace to be had elsewhere. It is to be found in the Cathedral garden by the south transept—a garden which starts with conscientious formality, but fades off, beyond the apse, into an untutored remoteness. It is to be found at the highest point of the causeway running right round the ramparts, which, where it reaches its climax, offers from the summit of a broken cliff a vast view over the surrounding country. It is to be found in the small paved courtyard of the abandoned romanesque church of Notre Dame du Rocher, standing, as though sunk in its own centuries of history, a dozen feet below one of the long busy streets which run from the high end of the old town to the low.

If, with your peace, you desire grandeur and a sense of the scale of this beloved France, go to the lower town, turn your back on Gambetta and the railway station, and come to the great bridge over the river. This river, after crossing the plain, makes a wide sweep round the horse's hoof. It washes the cliff-foot at its highest point, then curves out into the plain again so as to enclose a desultory suburb between itself and the parent hill, then once more turns in to touch the corner of the lower town before it enters the rocky gorge which is the beginning of the rugged country. An old pack-road led from these highlands to the fortress-hamlet dominating the flat country from its hill, and was carried across the river at this point on a huge fortified bridge. This bridge, and the wide stretch of water to either side of it, make a grandiose picture—a picture which changes from hour to hour with the

reflections of the sky on the river, with the willows turning from green to silver in the wind, and with the sun lighting a shadowed cliff from gloomy grey to brilliant yellow streaked with red.

But tranquillity is only half, alike of the enchantment and the life of my *ville de province*. It can be very noisy, and its bustle, vitality, gaiety and pleasure-seeking are the other half. A foreigner is, of course, only on the fringe of the town's life; but what a fringe it is! To begin with, the meals at the Cheval Blanc are an education in themselves. The dining-room is a long narrow room with a polished floor, mirrors on the walls and a few pictorial advertisements to serve as art. At the far end a table is reserved for officers stationed at the barracks in the town; there are other special tables for local notabilities; and at noon on market-days the place is filled to suffocation by the farmers of the neighbourhood. The food is superb—unpretentious, but lavish and cooked to perfection. An excellent *vin du pays* stands on every table. The Grand Hotel may serve for the rich tourists in their cars, for visiting politicians, and for those foreigners who do their sight-seeing by asterisk. But to those who know, the Cheval Blanc is the place for food, and the people who eat there make no pretence of not being interested in what they are doing. The uproar is terrific, for within doors the French prefer *tapage* to reserve. Laughter grows louder, faces shinier, local badinage more noisy and prolific. The stalwart young women who serve as waitresses scurry about with the utmost competence and unfailing good humour. Family parties lose a child and find another from a different set; there are screams and reconciliations and shrill maternal sentiment and sudden discipline from *le père cramoisi*.

Through all the noise, two old gentlemen—the Curator of the Musée and a doctor who is also the leading local antiquarian—talk steadily at their corner table. I watch them carefully, and never once does the Curator get his fair share, either of the potage from the battered metal tureen or of the wine. The antiquarian is not only learned in the past, but also right up to the minute in his timing of the second ladleful or another glass.

In the cafés, before meals and after, is life of a different sort. Here every class rubs shoulders with every other. There are distinctions between café and café, but they are rather distinctions of quality of mind than of wealth or status. In curious contrast to the hotel dining-room at the hour of déjeuner, there is here little noise beyond the hum of talk. In France it is not the custom to shout or laugh loudly over one's *consummation*, because the café and its amenities are considered to be adjuncts to conversation or to digestion, whereas a solid meal is an occasion for jollity. Only the flaunting few among the French (products of the between-war years) who think it chic to imitate Americans, are noisy in cafés, and of such hybrids there are none in this self-sufficient town. Even music, Heaven be praised, is virtually absent. At the café on the Place d'Armes a piano and two violins are gently intermittent; elsewhere there is either the radio or nothing. Quiet discussion, a low hiss or a sharp table-tap, the clink of saucer on saucer, the soft-voiced bidding of four "regulars" over their *manille aux enchères*—these are the normal noises of the provincial café.

The first day is nearly over. After a light and (in comparison with midday) a tranquil supper at the Cheval Blanc, after a café-cognac on the central square, one gazes placidly into the gathering dusk and, for the hundredth time, thanks God that nothing matters. What now? Maybe a fair is on, the booths and merry-go-rounds and rifle-ranges set up on the bleak stretch of trodden earth beyond the railway. Or one of the cafés advertises a conjuring entertainment or a concert. Or, on the blackboard at the entrance to the barn-like picture house, has been chalked CE SOIR CINÉMA. Or, in a narrow street that takes an elbow-turn inwards from the road along the river, the local offices of the oldest profession will oblige any sufficiently reckless visitor as readily as they do the soldiers from the barracks. Or there is dancing at the nearest thing to a *bal musette* which this quiet town provides. Or (and this is perhaps most to be recommended) a moonlight circuit of the ramparts, followed by another drink and bed, makes a good finish to a day. It is quite a walk uphill to the point of vantage

above the plain, returning down hill along the other side of the old town; and the buildings one has to pass are of every conceivable kind, from the Bishop's Palace behind its stately grille to the crazy tenements on the slummy side, many of which are propped with heavy balks against the rampart-wall.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a week available to enjoy the peace and freedom of this *ville de province*—seven precious days with no one but oneself to please. Sit down to plan a programme and no programme comes. Let things take their course, and one comes to the surface to find that the week is over. Only one thing is certain. The second morning—the whole of the second morning—must be reserved for a necessary visit to the Société Générale. I have no longer any illusions about this (one might imagine) quite commonplace experience. Here is the Letter of Credit; there is the Succursale of the Paris bank. Just walk in, present the Letter, sign the draft, and come out with the doings. As a summary of what happens that will serve, but it is over-condensed.

The Letter of Credit is certified by a high official of my bank in London. The various correspondents of this bank, all over the world, are supplied with a book containing facsimiles of the signatures of all its high officials. They are classified under the branches to which they belonged when the facsimiles were made; but it sometimes happens that between that time and the moment when I present my Letter of Credit at some bank in France, the particular official whose signature is my guarantee has been translated to a different branch. Consequently his facsimile does not appear under the address from which the Credit was issued.

The Société Générale (rightly enough) is inclined to distrust a travelling Englishman who wants money. Until it is confronted with two identical signatures—one in ink, the other in facsimile—it will not part with a centime. We settle down, therefore—I, the manager and the entire staff except the cashier in his glass box (who is busy banking the profits of the local entrepreneurs)—to turn over page after page of facsimiles in



search of the one which I, at any rate, am determined to find. There are a dozen facsimiles on each page and many, many pages. We turn and hunt and compare and turn again. Amid rising excitement the chase continues. The Société Générale hardly attempt to conceal their scepticism. I begin to lose faith in my Letter of Credit, which has manifestly been signed by an impostor. I shall be stranded penniless among people whose charm will quickly dissipate when they realize I cannot pay my bills. At last, however, my character is cleared. In the middle of a page headed "Manchester" is the signature of the courteous gentleman I saw a few days earlier in the West End of London. The bleak glances of the local staff warm into friendliness. We all shake hands and pat one another on the shoulder. The manager retires beaming to his private office, and I and a clerk go into a huddle over the considerable *paperasserie* still necessary before my money can become available. When at last I regain the street it is time for an *apéritif*. The morning is over.

There is still to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow, but only too many ways of filling them. Under the stone arcades of the main shopping-street are opportunities of every kind to browse or buy. In good weather one can take a day-long walk in the hills, with food and drink in a rucksack and, one can only hope, a corkscrew also. If one hires a car, there are within reach tiny hill-towns perched perilously on pinnacles; rolling uplands, with perhaps a huge and derelict abbey church hidden in their folds; underground caverns; small riverside restaurants where the trout are slim blue miracles.

In that blessed past, time alone was short—time, which nowadays drags so miserably under the torment of war. Let those of us at least who have known contentment be grateful for it, and to a dozen *villes de province* I dedicate in gratitude this woeful reminiscence of their hospitality. As a reconstruction of a stranger's happiness within their gates, it is, within its limits, true and typical. Admittedly nothing much has happened; yet everything has happened which was wanted to

happen. Liberty to go there or not to go; smiling and intelligent eyes; the fruits of the earth in profusion; beauty of nature and beauty of architecture; no hypocrisy, snobbery or ostentation; no ill-mannered stares, no curiosity, no officious interference, but when you ask for them service and civility—are not these among the essential qualities of freedom and civilization? No doubt, in these towns as in every other, there were jealousies and cruelties and shirking and dishonesty. But they are no part of my memories; even when I encountered them, they were so far outweighed by the virtues and friendliness of casual contacts that they are properly forgotten.

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And is it now “Good-bye, ville de province” or “Au revoir”? I am greatly afraid. Tortures such as France is suffering, the wounds inflicted by barbarian conquerors and, more agonizing still, by traitors in her midst, will be slow to heal and will leave ugly scars. The years go by; and there will come a time when France, though she be France once more, will lie beyond my reach. If that be so, I shall bid her farewell with bitter sorrow; yet thank her once again for the privilege of having been, unknown to her, at once a lover and a friend.

# THE DEMORALIZED CITY

BERLIN 1919-1929

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IN 1871 THE city of Berlin had a population of about 800,000 of whom a fifth lived in tenement buildings. By 1905 the population had increased to two million, and of these *one half* lived in tenement blocks, with a density of occupation varying from three to thirteen persons in one room. And so it went on; with the result that, when the war of 1914 broke out, a huge and inarticulate mass of people, behind the glittering bombastic façade of the Wilhelmine capital, endured housing conditions which, for overcrowding, were worse than those in any other large city of Europe or the United States. These wretched folk were mostly poor, many of them desperately so; but even such as earned good wages could not escape the horrors of barrack-like and teeming tenements. There was nowhere else for them to go.

The origins of this evil state of affairs lie far back in the militaristic obsessions of the Kings of Prussia; but the conditions existing at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, and only superficially altered between that date and 1914, were directly produced by the joint action of the Prussian bureaucracy and the Berlin police. These powerful bodies, in the interests of site-values and housing-speculation (which were also interests of their own), clamped down on the city regulations designed to prevent a perfectly possible outward spread and to compel block dwellings to go inward and upward. The *Polizei Verordnung* of 1858 to 1862 decreed the covering with what came to be termed "Mietskaserne" of every available yard of a strictly defined city area. Floor was piled on floor; behind the street-façade court after court (sometimes as many as seven) were crammed this way and that, with no thought of light or air, but with the sole intention of creating as many habitable rooms as possible. Under the buildings were cellars. They

also were dwellings; and how numerous such basement dwellings must have been is indicated by the fact that as recently as 1925, after the drastic clearances undertaken by the Weimar Republic had been in progress for at least three years, there were still 70,000 Berliners living in underground rooms.

Such was the core of the grey, grim, hideous city when the débâcle of 1918 peeled off its blatant skin and left the angry misery exposed. What happened then has been described in several books and from several points of view, and of these books three in particular (each in its day was made available to English readers) should be remembered, alike for their own qualities and for the extent to which, between them, they illustrate the progressive stages of the demoralization of Berlin.

The first is an authentic eye-witness account, with little literary pretension, of the critical weeks which followed the Armistice. It is staged in the administrative centre of the city, which at that moment was the nerve-centre of the whole organism. The second is a magnificent achievement in creative fiction, bringing to life the wretchedness and cruelty and growing lawlessness prevailing in the north-eastern areas of the town when, a year or two later, some sort of central order and authority appeared to have been established. The third is a bitter cameo of the despair which by 1930 had gripped even the well-intentioned minority of the monied classes, and left them helpless before the calculated onset of the Goulasch-Baronen and their hired assassins.

## I

In order to convey as clearly as possible the grim story of *Regiment Reichstag*<sup>1</sup> it is necessary briefly to recall the state of affairs in Germany, and particularly in Berlin, prior to and during January 1919, which is the period of the story's action.

Revolution had, of course, begun even before the coming of the Armistice. As readers of Prince Max of Baden's Memoirs will remember, the Fleet had already dissolved into anarchy by

<sup>1</sup> "Regiment Reichstag" by Kurt Lamprecht, London, 1932. Translated by Basil Creighton.

5th November, and bands of "Red" sailors had set out on the way southward from Kiel, Cuxhaven, Lübeck and Hamburg. On 7th November the Majority Socialists (who corresponded roughly to the Trade Union members of the British Labour Party, and had been included by Prince Max in the last Government of Imperial Germany) had formally declared that unless (among other things) the Kaiser forthwith abdicated, they would be unable to restrain the excited crowd of their followers from mass-demonstration. They stated bluntly that the mobs of workmen and soldiers, once in the streets, would yield to agitation and listen, at best to the more extreme Independent Socialists, at worst to the frankly Bolshevist vehemence of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, whose party had taken to itself the high-sounding—and in the tale of Germanic freedom traditional—name of "Spartacus".

On 8th November important provincial cities began one by one and with alarming rapidity to "go Red". First went Munich, Stuttgart and Brunswick; then Leipzig and Halle; in the late afternoon news was received in the capital of the Bolshevization of Düsseldorf, Cologne and Magdeburg. In consequence, even before the Armistice was signed, Berlin—isolated by special and drastic measures—had become a lonely and rather sinister island in the midst of an apparently irresistible and rising tide of Bolshevism. On 9th November, after nearly forty-eight hours of passionate entreaty from the harassed Chancellor in Berlin, the Kaiser, now at Spa and living in a fool's paradise of belief in the loyalty of his field armies, consented to a partial and sadly belated abdication. A few hours later—the limitations on his withdrawal having been rejected by the Social-Democratic ministers, and the reliability of his troops being suddenly realized for the phantom which it was—the Emperor, who for vanity's sake had refused to save his country from the risk of civil war, fled ignominiously to Holland. The Empire had crashed and the régime of the Hohenzollerns was over.

Prince Max of Baden resigned his no longer existing office; Friedrich Ebert, son of the working class, Trade Union leader, and first Prime Minister of democratic Germany, reigned in

his stead. On 10th November, forced into uneasy alliance by the now open threat of Bolshevism, the Ebert Government and the Officers' Corps of the ex-Imperial Army, under the leadership of Hindenburg, agreed by telephone to co-operate against the forces of disruption. On 11th November came the Armistice, and Germany was for the first time fully awake to the humiliation and the significance of defeat.

From this date until mid-December Berlin swung uneasily over the gulf of chaos. The struggle was now between the Majority Socialist Government of Ebert, Scheidemann, Landsberg and Noske (with whom for their own reasons were allied certain elements of the old régime) and the various frankly iconoclastic parties of the extreme Left. This struggle was the more complex and the more acute in that Ebert, anxious above all things to avoid bloodshed and to maintain the outward unanimity of the German Revolution, had included in his Government certain leaders of the Independent Socialists, whom he did not trust any the more for being their colleague. And indeed the Independents, led variously by Haase, Barth, Ledebour and Eichhorn, were of a treacherous colouring, which shaded from a little to the left of Ebert to a very little to the right of Liebknecht. It was not surprising, therefore, that their alliance with the Majority Socialists was a restless one, nor that Ebert's suspicion of their loyalty was justified. Eichhorn, for example (who had been made Chief Commissioner of Police), created during December the "Sicherheitswehr", an armed body of his own which appears in *Regiment Reichstag* as the Revolutionary Defence Force. This private army was not only a threat to the central Government, but could not even be relied upon to support its own leader. As is related in Lamprecht's story, its members actually sold their munitions to the Ebertite emergency troops, whose bank-notes could more easily be converted into food, drink and luxuries than the libertarian rhetoric of Eichhorn and his lieutenants.

Side by side with the Sicherheitswehr—indeed within a quarter of a mile of it—was the so-called "Volksmarine Division", lodged in the stables of the former Imperial palace.

This curious body had originally been composed of revolutionary sailors from the North Sea bases, who had marched on Berlin and had forcibly occupied the Imperial Schloss. The men were for a time in the pay and under the leadership of Count von Metternich, an aristocratic opportunist of wealth, courage and ingenuity but, as leader of a Putsch, of imperfect judgment. On 6th December he attempted a counter-revolutionary coup which miserably failed, and the Volksmarine Division saw him no more. His place in the Imperial Schloss was taken by two Communist sailors, and the Division finally degenerated into a rabble of hooligans from the slums of Hamburg and Berlin. This disorderly mob of ruffians put the Palace to the sack; were in part bought out of it by terrified officials, in part driven out by the guns of the Officers' Corps; and moved themselves and their booty to the Marstall (or royal stables), where, when *Regiment Reichstag* begins, they are obstinately if uncomfortably established. The Volksmarine Division was "agin" everything, but more particularly "agin the Government", so that the task of the Ebertite forces was, in turn, to eliminate it and Eichhorn's Sicherheitswehr, lest the two—agreed at least in the desirability of plundering everyone better off than themselves—made common cause and swelled the hosts of official Communism, which were of all menaces to security the most serious, because the best disciplined and most coherently aware of what they wanted.

The chief stronghold of the armed forces of Spartacus was that area of the city which lies immediately to the east and south of the Potsdam and Anhalt Stations and is known as the "Zeitungs Viertel", or newspaper quarter. Here were the offices of the big newspapers (including the Social Democratic *Vorwärts*, by now the Government organ), the chief news bureaux, and a vital conglomeration of telegraph and telephone lines, the seizure of which was an early and deliberate move in the Communist plan of campaign. The recapture of the Zeitungs Viertel from the Spartacists provides some of the most exciting chapters of *Regiment Reichstag*.

In all this confusion and tension passed the Christmas of 1918 and dawned the first days of the new year. It is important to realize that the Ebert Government were determined to go to almost any length in order to avoid themselves using force. Although finally driven to do so, they refrained until the last moment of the eleventh hour from invoking the armed assistance of the Officers' Corps, which, supported by the loyal rump of the front line armies, were ready at any moment to march on Berlin. The Cabinet suspected that the officers only waited for an opportunity to launch a counter-revolution; that, although they were for the moment ready to co-operate with any party which stood for law and order, they would only tolerate a Social Democratic government for just so long as one was indispensable to their own plans. Vis-à-vis the army, therefore, Ebert's problem was to get their help but to control it, and the solution of that problem was ultimately found in the forceful and ruthless energy of Noske.

But if the government were afraid to rely too greatly on the "Right", they were equally too much afraid of the "Left" to give formal recognition to armed assistance from volunteer bodies who, for the sake of the community, were anxious to help authority against disruption. Hence the queer haphazard origins and forlorn final scattering of the improvised troop of fighting men, with which *Regiment Reichstag* is concerned.

A young ex-officer in a shabby uniform is wandering without money or occupation down a wintry street; the town is clearly on the edge of chaos; he is cold, lonely and sunk in the apathy of hopelessness. A man comes running, sees the officer's shoulder-straps, drags him up another street to where two thousand men are waiting outside the ex-Imperial Chancellery—waiting for the government which they want to help to tell them how to help it. The ministers inside the Chancellery neither show themselves nor send an order. They are afraid. They dare not organize even a small citizen army lest their so-called colleagues of the Left cry "Traitors!" and, on the ground that the revolution is in danger, lash the already restless working classes into a fury. So the two thousand would-be defenders of law and order wait unhappily in the bitter wind—



leaderless, unarmed, held together only by an instinctive desire to safeguard harmless folk from robbery and murder. Meanwhile just beyond the houses, in the wide spaces of the Tiergarten, a vast crowd of armed Spartacists is slowly gathering in preparation for the attack which is to be launched that very night, the attack which is known to be coming, in the face of which the distracted government sits paralysed and defenceless.

The young ex-officer finds himself on the step of the Chancellery, raised by a crazy fluke from destitution to the command of two thousand men. He masters the event, and marches his followers to the nearest barracks in search of arms. The Reichstag Regiment has come into being.

Once this auxiliary force has, as it were, formed itself, government supporters take skilful action. The cat has jumped, and those hitherto on the fence jump with it. "Blark" appears at the crucial moment to supply money and food, to establish the regiment in the Reichstag building which, just out of Unter den Linden and overlooking the Tiergarten, stands at a vital point in the very path of the Spartacists. The stage is set and the drama of Kurt Lamprecht's book begins.

When it is all over, the government and their unofficial and none too disinterested supporters become again obstinately unaware of Regiment Reichstag. Summoned as though by unseen forces from the shadows, those who survive of the volunteer band which saved Berlin for the Republic fade into the shadows once more. They have done what was required of them and, the crisis past, are no longer wanted. Injustice certainly; but the injustice of fate rather than of man. Ebert's patient idealism, his obstinate reluctance to seek help where it was easiest to find—that is to say among the natural enemies of the Revolution—were in the end to justify themselves. The government took a gambler's chance indeed; and it is almost certain that they would not have won their desperate stake, but for the improvised heroism of Regiment Reichstag. This they knew as well as anyone. The irony of the situation was that they could not admit they knew it—then or at any time thereafter.

It is sufficiently strange and terrible (especially now, when another great war is in progress and another defeat must wreak a direct as well as an indirect revenge on Germany) that the events described by Lamprecht should, in fact and in detail, have taken place in the centre of the city of Berlin, only a dozen years before he wrote his book. But still more terrible is the dogged forgetfulness to which the protagonists, the spectators and the victims of the drama of those evil weeks vowed themselves.

"No one ever mentions those days now", says Lamprecht in the final passage of his book. "They have been wiped out like chalk from a blackboard as though they had never been. Yet there were many people in Berlin in January, 1919, when the war was at an end, who heard bullets whistle for the first time. . . . Years later the marks of bullets were still to be seen on the houses. Now they have been removed. . . . All those who were employed in the Reichstag building have either gone or died. Nobody now knows anything of those days."

That every material trace of the street-fighting should have been removed as quickly as possible from house-fronts, pavements and trees is natural and comprehensible; but that tens of thousands of Berliners should have conspired to blot from their minds and speech all apparent memory of what must have been the most agonizing experience of their lives, is desperate proof of the reality of terror (a terror, be it observed, of its own people and not at all of an angry and victorious enemy) which for weeks overshadowed the German capital. They are the miseries and horrors of which nothing is said that are never forgotten.

## II

Time has moved forward. The Weimar Republic, raised on the hazardous foundation of a compromise between Social Democratic Ministers with a huge parliamentary majority and a Bureaucracy and Judiciary unpurged of their Imperial and therefore reactionary personnel, has, outwardly at least,

"Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf" by Alfred Döblin.

achieved structural solidity. The small central area of Berlin—a rough parallelogram from the Sieges-Säule to the Schloss, from Belle Alliance to Nollendorf Platz—over which the Reichstag Regiment fought its forgotten battle, is officially calm and dominant. But shift the scene a short mile to eastward, and we are in a cauldron of men and vehicles, a cauldron seething with desperate, ruthless life.

This cauldron—the thrusting, clamorous, unsleeping Alexanderplatz—is, as it should be, the chief character in Döblin's long novel to which it gives its name. What will have become of "the Alex" when we see it again—what has even now become of it—only time will show. In the 1920's, when Döblin drew his impressive portrait, it was one of the chief traffic centres of Berlin—a large and irregular open space from which radiated several main streets, across which a dozen lines of tramway ground unceasingly, over which lowered the echoing viaducts and one of the principal stations of the Stadtbahn, into which drained ooze and slime from the swamps of misery which bounded it to north and east. Imagine ourselves back under the Weimar Republic, and viewing the square and its hinterland as they then were.

Alexanderplatz lies immediately to the east of the old town, which—with the island in the Spree where stand the big Museums, the Cathedral, the Schloss and other outbreaks of Prussian rhetoric—cuts it off with sensational completeness from the beginnings of the Linden, the main shopping streets and what was, before the transformation of the Kurfürstendamm, the pleasure quarter of the city. The effectiveness of this barrier is extraordinary. From the Zeughaus to Alexanderplatz is just over a kilometre, yet the two belong to different worlds. You can look westward from Franz Josef Platz down the long perspective of the Linden, through the Brandenburg Gate into the greenery of the Tiergarten. That is ceremonial Berlin—spacious, flaunting and tedious. Turn about and no vista greets you, but a short zigzag walk through the tiny patch of old Berlin brings you to the Alex, which in its way is also spacious, but raucous rather than flaunting, and very far from tedious. Police Headquarters abut on the Alex, and

policemen swarm in the square itself. Number One District Court and the Central Markets of the city are close at hand. In the Alex public authority and building contractors seem always busy on reconstruction works. The square is a litter of hoardings, heaps of gravel, piles of girders. Mechanical drills thud deafeningly, a crash of rubble tells of housebreakers at work, tearing down the Berlin of fifty years ago to make way for the Berlin of a very problematical to-morrow. In and out the trams screech and clang their bells; the overhead trains go rumbling by; taxis hoot, brakes grind, hawkers shout on the pavements, and the patient rather shabby throng of Berlin men and women jostle and push and drag their way to office, shop or café.

Long bleak noisy streets run out from the Alex, northward to Wedding, Reinickendorf and Pankow, north eastward to Friedrichshain with its ornate but somehow miserable park and, beyond, to Weissensee; eastward through the slums round the Schlesischer Bahnhof to Rummelsburg, southward to Neukölln. These are the districts where factories alternate with canyons of Mietskaserne, and where labouring folk, who stream to work at daybreak and back again at dusk, are crowded into steep grey blocks of one- or two-room flats.

Alfred Döblin could have chosen no better title for his pageant of Berlin<sup>1</sup>, no more suitable pivot for its massed and turbulent action, than this vital point in the city's geography, which of all traffic centres in the Prussian capital is the most characteristic and the most indigenous. Nor could he have staged the pageant at a more dramatic moment in the town's history. In pre-'14 days the crowds which haunted the Alex were predominantly lower middle and working class crowds, ranging from persons living in decent comfort to the struggling poor and the destitute. Among them, no doubt, were such thieves and bullies and prostitutes as would normally mingle with the population of a poor quarter of a big city; but the life of the square was drab, graceless and commonplace rather than sinister. By the 1920s it has changed. The surface marks, as presented by Döblin, remain more or less the same—the

<sup>1</sup> "Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf" by Alfred Döblin, London, 1931. Translated by Eugene Jolas.

passers-by, the vehicles, the police on point duty, the shops with their signs and lettering, the hoardings, the municipal notices, the newspaper placards. But look closer; look into the faces, into the minds, of certain of the citizens. They are recent citizens, drawn to the metropolis by defeat, by inflation, by the chances of fishing in the troubled waters of national collapse. There they are, moving in and out of the crowds of ordinary folk, or quietly sitting in the several cafés which they have made their own—the unobtrusive yet unmistakable figures of the gangsters of Berlin.

Alexanderplatz has now admittedly become the vestibule and concourse of their stronghold, their slave-market and their base of operations. Their dominion spreads out from the Alex like a three-quarter-open fan. The southern and eastern portions of this fan are a desolate region where, behind factories and second-rate stores, lurk dismal tenements and hopeless poverty. The side streets from the Schlesischer station to the Büsching Platz, hidden along the main arteries under a veneer of small bourgeois vulgarity, are nothing less than rookeries. Although the story is actually staged in Moabit, a district to the north-west of the Alex and outside its kingdom proper, Birkenfeld's novel *Dritter Hof Links*<sup>1</sup> may be recommended as a description of life in a Mietskaserne, and of the degradation of children growing up in its dark squalor. The desolate room in which Frau Schwarzer makes her gallant hopeless fight for decency, in which Paul and his sister find the only outlet possible for their urgent sexuality, to which poverty and starvation chain the whole family as effectively as though they were in fetters, is a replica of a thousand rooms, its misery identical with a thousand miseries which at this period ringed the Alex to the east.

The western—one may say the “operative”—segment of the fan is no less wretched. But it is fighting-wretched and not sunk in apathy. Go along upper Kaiser Friedrich Strasse to the Hackesche Markt, thence up Rosenthaler Strasse to the so-called Rosenthal Platz (which is in fact a major cross-roads),

<sup>1</sup> English edition under the title *A Room in Berlin*, translated by Eric Sutton, London, 1930.

thence to the Königs Tor and back again to the Alex by Neue Königs Strasse. You have made the circuit of the black heart of a black area, of the district currently known as the "Verbrecher Viertel". The main street of the Verbrecher Viertel is (in a populous sense) Münz Strasse, where are garish cheap shops, bars in which "Koks" (*das weisses Gift*) is hawked and gaming tables kept, dubious little cinemas and dingy come-and-go hotels. Just to the north of Münz Strasse lie the stews of Dragoner, Mulack, Stein and Roch Strassen—a maze of dark entries and inner courts, the haunts of street-girls of the most degraded class, of boys for sale, of dirt and vermin and misery.

Only the very minor gangsters actually live in the Verbrecher Viertel; the richer ones have luxury flats in gilded but equally disreputable districts in the West-End. But over the wretched inhabitants of this tangle of wretched streets, gangsterdom rules with cold malevolence. The small fry—pimps and thugs and thieves of every kind—are planted there to provide the equivalent of cannon-fodder and generally to do their masters' bidding. These lick-spittles sit in their special cafés on and near the Alex and murmur enigmatically. They take their tribute from the girls who walk the Friedrich Strasse; they watch the children growing in the slums until they also are old enough to be sold and pay their footing as "Verhüteten". When the big shots stroll in with the orders for to-night, their hirlings are servile and obedient.

To this underworld belong the chief characters of Döblin's *Alexanderplatz*, whose lurid but moving story is a story of gangsters' villainy, of prostitutes' fidelity, and of the terrible things which befall one Franz Biberkopf, a man who has been in gaol for murdering a girl, who comes out of gaol bemused with fate but anxious to live straight in future, naïve, credulous, and penniless. Biberkopf tries his hand at this job and that, resists the lure of Communism, works harder, begins to make good. Then he is cheated by a man he thought his friend, and his simple faith in his new life has its first rude shock. He drifts to a crook-café on the Alex, falls in with Reinhold (surely one of the most cold-hearted and loathsome villains in fiction?),

is once again deceived by smooth-tongued scoundrelism. He joins a gang in a night burglary, realizes he is to be their dupe, revolts, is thrown from a car by Reinhold and left for dead, struggles to health again but finds himself one-armed.

There follow a few months during which Biberkopf seems likely, with the help of a rival gang, to get his revenge on his betrayers. But Reinhold goes into hiding and the others scatter. Franz slips lower in the scale of social decency, to find real happiness with the street-girl Mieke. They live a brief idyll, the more moving in that it develops out of the ordinary relationship of pimp and prostitute. Then Reinhold reappears. Ignorant at first of the girl's connection with Biberkopf, he casts on her his cold but lustful eye. She evades him and he discovers who is her protector. Combined fear and jealousy of the man he once tried to murder decide Reinhold simultaneously to satisfy his desire for Mieke and to crush her lover. The unhappy girl is hideously sacrificed, the killer vanishes, and suspicion falls naturally on Franz, who is known to have lived with her and known also to have done to death one girl already and been in gaol for it.

In the end the hateful Reinhold gets some part of his deserts; and Biberkopf, after passing through the valley of the shadow and lying for weeks in a hospital asylum, achieves some measure of serenity. But the girl who loved and slaved for him is dead, his faith in human nature is shattered, his mind is weak, his memory gone. We leave him—a creature without past or future, a sort of disembodiment of his former self—earning a humble living as a janitor, moving indifferently among the jostle and noise and soulless scramble of the Alex.

Döblin's great novel needs reading. The position is not altogether that you have to learn and accept its formula, nor that the book and its method are acquired tastes, at first formidable and a little distasteful, later a delectation. Both these elements are present, but plus something else. Perhaps the situation can best be summed up by saying that, either you and Döblin "click" and become friends for life, or you do not.

His technique has been compared with that of Joyce in

*Ulysses*, but it is finer textured, more resilient, less harshly insolent. He runs sentences straight on, passing from a few words of narrative to a list of the stopping-places on a tram, to mottoes on an automatic fortune-teller, to a tailor's placard, to extracts from the telephone-book, to insurance advertisements, to all and any manifestation of the clamorous complexity of a huge commercial city. He breaks off to apostrophize the reader, he repeats words and phrases, he throws in a few lines of rhyme to coax a smile or change the rhythm of the reader's mind. He is demure, violent, pedantic, impressionist, frenzied, serene. There never was a book at once so tempestuous and so controlled, never a portrait of a metropolis so bewildering yet so obviously true. *Alexanderplatz* presents the soul of Biberkopf, the soul of the unhappy Mieke, the souls of souteneurs and criminals and papersellers and prostitutes, above all the soul of Berlin in the 1920's.

It would be an injustice, when paying a tribute to this novel, to make no mention of its translator, for by no means the least remarkable feature of the English rendering is the English into which it has been rendered. Döblin in German is tremendous and majestic but (one would have said) untranslatable. Eugene Jolas not only achieved the apparently impossible, he went beyond it. His English version was more than a translation of the German, it was a re-creation.

### III

Kästner is best known to the English reader as the author of *Emil and the Detectives* and other delightful stories about children. His reputation for graceful, whimsical and charming tale-telling gives an added tang to the startled appreciation with which a reader comes to *Fabian*.<sup>1</sup> Here, as in the child books, are distinction, vivid economy of words, humour and tenderness, but the humour is defiant and the tenderness the final gesture of one condemned to death.

*Fabian* is a short novel describing a few weeks in the life of a young Berliner of imagination, humanity and adequate means during the late 1920s. As a description of the agony of

<sup>1</sup> "Fabian" by Erich Kästner, London, 1932. Translated by Cyrus Brooks.



Republican Germany it is at once beautiful and terrible. Kästner writes with swift and mocking savagery, and that his bitter irony is shot with gaiety makes more pitiful the piteous tale he tells.

All the hysterical but forlorn debauchery of a desperate hopeless city passes before our eyes. "Berlin" says Fabian, "so far as its inhabitants are concerned has long since resembled a mad-house. In the east resides crime, in the centre roguery, poverty in the north and vice in the west, and ruin dwells at every point of the compass." "And what comes after ruin?" asks Cornelia. Fabian plucks at a little twig hanging over the railing and answers, "I am afraid imbecility".

And indeed imbecility has come. No restraints, no principles, no ambitions, merely a frantic longing to find a few hours' forgetfulness in drink and sensuality. Through a desolate carnival of reckless, heartsick vice moves Fabian, the gentle cynic. If he tries to help, he is cheated; if he tastes of pleasure, it turns to ashes in his mouth. The end, thanks to a piece of selfless bravery, is death—and (crowning irony) death to no purpose.

To justify *Fabian* to readers who like or dislike novels according to their theme is impossible. Everything they find most distasteful is here. The book is acrid, harrowing, inconsolable; it treats of lust, perversion and harlotry. Yet it is the very antithesis of muck-raking. It is a poignant, almost an unbearable lament for murdered beauty. In the wasted garden of Fabian's idealism a handful of last flowers remain—the tender loveliness of his few days with Cornelia, the perfect understanding between him and his mother, his mortal grief after Labude's futile suicide. And one by one they are crushed into the dirt by the jackboot of a crazy fate.

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These three books may without exaggeration be said to constitute a graduated course of study in the psychology of national collapse. They also present, with a lurid horror both fearful and fascinating, the disintegration and final hysteria of a once proud metropolis.

In bitter winter weather a handful of unremembered men stave off the chaos of massacre and pillage which threatens Berlin. The town stumbles to its feet, leans against the frail fence which has saved it from destruction, slowly recovers its wits and its stability.

But after the enemy without comes the enemy within. From the dark tenements in the east the underworld creeps out to prey upon a society which, for all its apparent convalescence, is deadly sick. In the Herrenklub, in Government offices, in discreet luxurious villas, in the board-rooms of Banks and Industrial undertakings, in the lounges of international hotels in other countries than their own, the overworlds of finance, commerce and high politics prepare to reap the harvest of their compatriots' misery. The torments of the German people have been genuine enough; their power of resistance is nearly broken. The time is at hand when their real rulers—men who have steadily thwarted the efforts of the honest few to establish a democratic Republic, who have engineered many of the miseries of Germany and by clever propaganda exploited them all, who have undermined the never very robust faith and thrown sand in the never very perceptive eyes of her former enemies—will unleash on their unhappy Fatherland a paranoiac demagogue and a horde of fanatical thugs, all securely bought and paid for. Their moment will come very soon now. For a little longer, beneath an upper crust of dance-teas, lingerie and sport, crime, vice and cruelty shall fasten on the capital. Let the dream of victory (which had first given place to one of fear and then to one of timorous hope) turn finally into a nightmare of seemingly irrevocable defeat, so that at last the city wakes screaming to a reality of ruin worse even than the nightmare.

"And after ruin?"

"Imbecility."

The ravings of a lost generation, sounding from tenement and Diele, from palatial apartment-house and chromium-plated Nacht-Lokal, echo down the lighted corridors of the asylum which is the Berlin of Hitler's eve.

## (i) HENRY CARLESS DAVIS, 1874-1928

IN THE first paragraph of the official Memoir of Henry Carless Davis,<sup>1</sup> the nowadays President of Trinity declares that Davis' "best memorial is his abiding influence on those with whom his work brought him into contact". These fortunate folk, even when Dr. Weaver's Memoir was published ten years ago, were comparatively few, and are now fewer still. But persons who never knew Davis, yet could richly have profited from the example of his incisive genius and unflinching devotion to duty, were and remain innumerable. It seems, then, almost a duty laid upon anyone able to supplement or expand the sympathetic record of Davis' career of scholarship and administration, to bear his own testimony to a man both loved and revered.

Any such testimony must be an individual one, and no apology is offered for the use of the first person singular in much of what follows. Davis' life was one of self-effacement in the interests, alike of his pupils, of the art as well as of the science of history, and of his country. His intellectual integrity was so complete, his ambition so utterly concerned with doing his work as well as he could do it and leaving the applause for those who cared for applause, that to leave the man to speak for himself would be to invite silence.

As one privileged to learn from him and to work under his orders, I wish to place on record the respect and affection which over a period of twenty years I felt for him, and, if possible, to draw a pen-portrait of a personality whose modesty and shyness tended to conceal from casual acquaintances its true fineness and nobility.

<sup>1</sup> *Henry William Carless Davis, 1874-1928. A Memoir by J. R. H. Weaver. And a Selection of his Historical Papers edited by J. R. H. Weaver and Austin Lane Poole. London, 1933.*

As it is now over fifteen years since Davis died, a brief summary of his career can with advantage preface the slight personal memories which are all I, as an individual, have to offer.

He was born at Ebley, near Stroud, in January, 1874, the eldest of five children. Before he was ten years old, his mother was widowed and faced with bringing up her considerable family on very narrow means. In 1884, therefore, she moved to Weymouth and opened a school for small children. She was a woman of remarkable intelligence and character, and to Harry, her eldest son, descended not only full measure of his mother's ability and determination but also (as Dr. Weaver wisely suggests) an early sense of responsibility for those younger and weaker than himself. It was his job to work, so that he could help his mother, and seldom can a man have made more splendid use of his mental gifts than did Harry Davis from the moment when, as a shy red-headed little boy of twelve, he won a scholarship to Weymouth College.

Fortunate in his teachers, he passed brilliantly through school; at seventeen won the famous Brackenbury History Scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford, and came up in 1891. Despite his History Scholarship he read for Honour Mods. and Greats, taking a double first in 1893 and 1895. Although quite unrepented as a student of history, he went in for an All Souls Fellowship in 1895 and by sheer merit was elected over the head of several "fancied" candidates. He was history lecturer at New College in 1897 and transferred to Balliol in 1899, in which year he published his first book, a History of the College. In 1900 appeared his *Life of Charlemagne* in the "Heroes of the Nations" series; and in 1902 he was elected Fellow of Balliol. He remained one for twenty years. In 1905 he published *England under the Normans and Angevins*, a book which proved to all historical students that a new mediaevalist of the first rank had made his appearance. Between then and the end of 1914 (in addition to various papers and reviews contributed to learned periodicals) he wrote *Mediaeval Europe* in the "Home University Library" (1911), prepared a new edition of Stubbs' *Charters* (1913); and produced, in *The*

*Political Thought of Heinrich von Treitschke* (1914) a work which will one day be re-discovered and, perhaps, as highly prized as it deserves to be for its detachment and avoidance of polemics.

My father wrote to congratulate him on this admirable book, and received in reply the following characteristically controlled, unpretentious yet fully informative letter.

December 10 [1914]

My dear Sadler,

Very many thanks for your praises of my book, which are particularly pleasant as I know you are one of the critics most competent to judge a book on Treitschke. It was entirely at Michael's invitation that I plunged into the subject, and I am now very grateful to him for having persuaded me. I found as I went on that my liking for Treitschke's personality increased more than my respect for his philosophy. But it was reassuring to discover that his views were altogether more humane and more rational, when studied in their context, than I had been led to expect. I should have liked to make a careful study of his *Geschichte* but neither space nor time permitted; so I concentrated upon his attitude towards England, seeing that I was there on relatively familiar ground and that, in handling such a favourite topic, he would be certain to show his characteristic merits and prejudices.

It was at the beginning of 1915 that Davis was invited to join a small group entrusted by the Committee of Imperial Defence with the creation of a Trade Intelligence Service. The decision to abandon a life of teaching and study for the mixture of scramble and circumlocution which was Whitehall in 1915 must have been a hard one. Essentially unhurried, laconic and direct, Davis could only have felt a distaste for the wild improvisations of a temporary government department in continual conflict with the haughty routine of its permanent superiors, and often the sport of jealous pomposities in high places. But he accepted the invitation and went to

London. In collaboration with the Postal Censorship, the task of creation resulted in the War Trade Intelligence Department, a vital element in the Blockade of the Central Powers. Davis was vice-Chairman, and until the end of 1918 worked early and late with a calm concentration which must have exhausted him more than anyone was allowed to guess. In December, 1918, he went to Paris as a member of the British Delegation to the Peace Conference.

Not until April, 1919, was he at home again. He resumed work at Oxford, taking on, in addition to his academic tasks, the editorship of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, recently acquired by the Clarendon Press and due for extension and gradual revision. Dr. Weaver, who as his colleague in this great undertaking, knows the truth better than anyone, bears impressive testimony to Davis' tact and conscientiousness both in dealing with contributors and in not releasing articles until by his own strict standards they were good enough. In 1921 he accepted the Professorship of Modern History at Manchester University and occupied this chair until in 1925 he became Regius Professor at Oxford and returned thither once more. "I think myself very fortunate" he wrote, "although the chair of Stubbs is a Siege Perilous for his successors."

It is not generally known that in 1923 he was virtually offered the Vice-Chancellorship of Leeds University which my father had just resigned. Here is the letter he wrote to my father when he had definitely decided against acceptance—a letter which declares frankly his desire for a life of scholarship and emphasizes the sacrifice which, eight years earlier and from a sense of public duty, he had made in exchanging Oxford for London.

July 8 [1923]

My dear Master,

I was encouraged by your very kind note to go into the question of the Vice-Chancellorship at Leeds at some length with the pro-Chancellor and some other members of the Council. They were all most cordial and gave me the fullest information about the present position and their plans for the future. But the more I talked with them, the

more definitely it appeared that they are in search of a public man who would have in the county the same kind of influence that you exercised and would undertake a good deal of missionary work on behalf of the University. I had serious doubts as to my qualifications for such work, and it would obviously be a misfortune for myself and for the University if I attempted it and failed in it. I have therefore written to say that I think it more prudent to abide by the scholar's career, which is and always has been the most congenial to me.

When Davis became Regius Professor he was little more than fifty years of age; and to those who knew him well enough to regard him as almost a superman for judgment, learning and power of work, there seemed no eminence in academic or in public work to which, if he cared to do so and if his health allowed, he might not attain. Yet less than three years later, having travelled northward with a chill on him to attend a meeting of examiners in the History School of Edinburgh University, he took pneumonia and pleurisy and died in an Edinburgh nursing home.

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My first sight of Davis was on the day early in 1909 when, as a Balliol freshman through Law Prelim, and ready to confront the History School, I was summoned to his room to meet my tutor. In his precise, rather muted voice he outlined the immediate programme. Every few moments, with a lift of the eyebrow, his "bright but somewhat cold-looking blue eyes that would obviously stand no nonsense" (to quote from one of the reminiscences garnered by the President of Trinity) would fix me steadily through his pince-nez. Astonishing, that glance of Davis'—a glance whose queerly slanting firmness never failed, all the years I knew him, to give a little bracing thrill of excitement. One felt at once that he was prepared to do the best he could for one, that his best was a very good best indeed, and that the shabbiest thing in the world would be to fail him. Goodness knows, we did fail him—often enough; but our failures were due to inefficiency or stupidity, never to

deliberate carelessness. And he seemed somehow to know when in a fumbling way one had struggled to live up to his own standards of honesty in work. Never was correction more gentle or criticism more constructive and less wounding than that administered by Davis to those who *tried*.

But in conflict with arrogance or ill-bred self-assertion he was devastating. From the days when, as Junior Dean and responsible for Balliol discipline, he would reduce a noisy group of self-appointed bloods to a scatter of shame-faced fledglings, to the few but unforgettable occasions when during and after the war he did battle with pretentious politicians or complacent officialdom, his capacity for quietly extinguishing his opponent was perfect, alike in technique and in results.<sup>1</sup> It was no doubt largely due to this uncompromising dislike of shoddiness, exhibitionism and self-importance that his work during the war years and afterward received so little official recognition. Only Asquith realized (or had the patriotism to admit that he realized) the possibilities of Davis as administrator. The late Alfred Sutro has recorded that Davis' comments on the government's handling of economic relations with neutral countries—comments which he occasionally inserted in a Secret Weekly Bulletin communicated to the Cabinet and to Heads of Departments—became so little to the taste of those sitting in the seats of the mighty that he was instructed to confine his Bulletin to statement of fact. One is reminded of Sir Eyre Crowe, and the pre-war unpopularity of his marginal comments in foreign policy. Nor is this the

<sup>1</sup> A story in illustration of the first of these two types of conflict is told in Dr. Weaver's book, but not, as I recall it, altogether adequately, or at any rate as I heard it in my undergraduate days. As it is said to date back to 1906, it may well have improved by 1909. Here is that year's version:

The morning after a tedious outbreak of inconsiderate rowdyism in the College Quad one of the ringleaders, ordered to attend the Junior Dean, came to Davis' room. His mien was jaunty, for he considered himself a young person of some social significance.

"Well, Fluffy," he began slipantly, "I seem to have made rather a floater last night."

Davis eyed him remotely.

"If by 'Fluffy' you mean me," he said, "and if by a 'floater' you mean behaviour unworthy of a gentleman, I agree with you."

And he passed sentence with corresponding severity.



only similarity between Crowe and Davis. Indeed it is implicit in their far deeper likeness. Both were men who thought of the public weal rather than of themselves; who were indifferent to publicity and too busy to flatter politicians; whose greatness was in consequence only realized by their country after they had killed themselves in its service. As I have said, absolute integrity of effort—to do the job in hand just as well as ever he could, without short cuts to effect, without either sloppiness or ostentation—was the guiding principle of Davis' life, and for this principle he laid down his life.

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Reading over what I have written, I realize that no pen-portrait has been achieved. Possibly the elusive fascination and uncanny stimulus of this great man cannot be put on paper. We can speak of the devotion and awe in which we held him; we can catch a glimpse in his diary and letters of his all-noticing humour and the half-diffident gaiety which underlay his perfectly controlled exterior. But only memory can bring back to us the simple dignity of his bearing, the sudden rather wistful charm of his smile, the pride we felt when, on meeting him after an interval, we realized that he was glad to see us. One is shy of the word "rectitude" nowadays; but if ever man had rectitude—the lofty, sometimes intimidating rectitude of utter probity of thought and judgment—that man was "Fluffy" Davis.

## (ii) W. B. MAXWELL, 1868-1938

WHEN Willie Maxwell died in August 1938, there disappeared from the contemporary scene, not only a man of many friends, not only a writer whose readers once numbered tens of thousands, but also a spirit of rare courtesy and good breeding.

Tribute was paid in obituary notices to his charm of manner, and stress laid on his freedom from "literary" affiliation and "literary mannerism". It is desirable to emphasize that this charm and this freedom were not, as sometimes,

surface-characteristics of a nature fundamentally diffident or of one half-ashamed of the job of authorship. They were of the very essence of the man, and at once the cause and effect of his distinction. For "distinguished" is the epithet beyond any other descriptive of Maxwell. The melancholy beauty of his appearance; his natural lack of vanity; his generous interest in the doings of others; the unobtrusive and always kindly wisdom of his books—these and other qualities composed a human being of a type so uncommon as to be inevitably conspicuous.

It may now be stated that Maxwell suffered secretly from a sense of failure. Although, if posterity does its job, he will ultimately be shown to have suffered unnecessarily, it is easy to see why from his own point of view he did so. Many writers of his generation shared the misfortune of having their work interrupted and their reputation suspended by the war-years, 1914-18. But not one, who before the war had achieved the prominence of Maxwell, was victimized to such an extent as he, by the revulsion of taste and manners which followed it. His very bibliography spells out the completeness of his ill-luck. From *Vivien* (1905), via *The Guarded Flame* (1906) and *Hill Rise* (1908), to *The Rest Cure* (1910) was a period of steady conquest, not only of a large popularity, but of the respect and admiration due from the few to a novelist in the great tradition, who knew men and women and how to write about them. Then with *In Cotton Wool* (1912) and *The Devil's Garden* (1913) Maxwell achieved what seemed impregnability. The richness of these novels, the drama and passion which underlay their perfect workmanship, could only have been contrived by a writer destined to dominate his generation.

But between 1913 and 1918 Maxwell published nothing. From the beginning of the War he was a soldier, and when civilian life began again, the world had changed and pre-War standards of taste were shattered. There was unconscious pathos in the title of the book which appeared in 1919: *The Great Interruption: a Man and his Lesson*, for though Maxwell's interruption had come and gone, its ultimate lesson was yet to learn. From 1920 onward he continued to write steadily. The

best of the post-War novels are precisely the riper, wiser and continuously scrupulous work that the earlier books promised. But the scurry and sour commercialism of the post-War book-world had neither patience nor understanding for a craftsmanship which only asked to be judged on its merits. Also the polite society of which Maxwell wrote, in the delineation of which he excelled, was no longer in the mode. Ironically enough, therefore (although a large public remained faithful to him), he gradually lost status with the critics because his characters were gentlefolk, just as his mother, "Miss Braddon", had in her day lost status because her characters were considered too frequently ill-bred.

But if critical justice is to come back again, if revaluations (other than depreciatory) are to persist, someone some time will give Maxwell his due, and reinstate him among those English novelists who served the novel faithfully and, first seeing real life through the eyes of knowledge, wrote it into an imaginative blend of beauty and struggle and human frailty.

(iii) EMILE VERHAEREN, 1854-1916

TO THE best of my recollection, the poetry of Emile Verhaeren was my final undergraduate enthusiasm—the enthusiasm in power at the moment when I left college and went to a stool in a publisher's office. With suitable conformity I had, during the four preceding years, passed through the various *Schwärmereien* proper to my period, though, I regret to say, in a discreditable and reactionary sequence. From play-readings of Ibsen, Strindberg and Shaw I had appropriately advanced to processions in support of Woman's Suffrage. But then, instead of passionately embracing the Minimum Wage and yielding to the bleak raptures of Syndicalism, I backslid. Almost overnight the wrongs of women and of workers were displaced by tuberoses and multicoloured Shantung shirts; by Huysmans, Rimbaud and colour-symphonies: by languorous decadence and enigmatic nudes.

For long enough these anachronous absurdities held sway. My place in the van of progress remained empty, and I became an object of contempt to all right-thinking and reformist young. Then suddenly Verhaeren came, and like a Flanders gale blew everything else away.

Confessedly this tremendous and invigorating wind might well have blown itself out, and its influence proved as transitory as that of its predecessors, had it burst over me a year earlier. The volatile curiosity of the college-boy passes easily from one fervour to another, and the sheltered freedom of his life gives it ample opportunity to do so. Clerking, however, is a different story; and Verhaerenism remained, as it were, in cold storage during the exigencies of my début as a wage-slave. Even when life had begun to settle into a new pattern and I had the peace of mind to visit the aesthetic frigidaire and see what there was in stock, the suspended enthusiasm might well have proved frozen beyond revival, but for a fortunate coincidence.

My first introduction to Verhaeren's work had come about (like so many other realizations of beauty) through the agency of Arthur Symons. In 1898 Symons had published a translation of the play *Les Aubes*, and as an undergraduate I had bought a second-hand copy of this, as of most of his other works. In a brief introduction prefixed to the play, Symons said sufficient about Verhaeren's poetry to set me eagerly on its track. I also discovered in *The Savoy* an appreciation of the poet's work (I believe the first to be printed in this country) by one Osman Edwards. By the merest chance, very shortly after emerging from my early struggles with the Day Book, the Cost Cards and the Authors' Ledger, and at the moment when I was dubiously surveying the rigid remains of my one-time Verhaeren-worship, I met Osman Edwards at some kind of a Modern Language binge at Goldsmiths College.

He was a short, tubby man, rather bald, with a sandy beard of the wire-brush variety. He had the awkward gruffness of the shy man, but behind his brusque pawkiness was a wide and sympathetic understanding of the literature of many countries. He had been a schoolmaster by profession (was still in fact

a visiting-master at St. Pauls), but of recent years had spent most of his time travelling and studying the drama in various lands. President of the Playgoers' Club, he had published several translations of plays from different languages.

Edwards responded with great kindness to a young man's ill-informed but clearly genuine enthusiasm for one of his own heroes, and not long after our first meeting I had a letter from him to say that he was going to Belgium at Easter, intended paying Verhaeren a visit, and would I like to go with him? My employers—Olympian but amiable—consented to a week of my holiday ahead of schedule, and on 8th April, the Wednesday before Easter, Osman Edwards and I left London for Brussels. This was in 1914.

A little more than four months later, an obscure paragraph in the newspapers stated that German artillery had bombarded the Flemish village of Saint Amand. Simultaneously, in numerous and prominent columns, they described the destruction of the ancient university city of Louvain. Finally, on 24th August, began the now famous British retreat south-westward from the line Mons-Condé. I well remember how dramatic and terrible seemed to be the connection between my idyllic Easter visit to Verhaeren's simple country home, and these three preliminary episodes of a four years' war. At Saint Amand Verhaeren was born; at Louvain he was educated; and not more than fifteen miles south-west of Mons, plumb in the track of the retreating British and the pursuing German hordes, lay the tiny hamlet of Le Caillou-qui-Bique and the farm-house, in an annex of which the poet for years past had spent the spring and summer months. The overwhelming of this little house was but one of tens of thousands of similar tragedies; but at the time it impressed me as the very symbol of invasion, as an epitome of all the destruction and beastliness and shattered peace which follow in invasion's wake.

The thought of Le Caillou, perhaps pillaged, perhaps burnt, certainly dark and desolate, was the more poignant in that on my return to London after Easter I had noted down in some detail the incidents of our visit. Re-reading these notes nearly thirty years later, I find that their straightforward triviality

recalls very clearly the Arcadian simplicity of Verhaeren's home, and the dignity, sweetness and unpretension of the poet and his wife. As, probably, they represent the last description of Le Caillou made or attempted before the tempest of war broke over it and swept it away, I now transcribe some portions of them. They are artless and superficial; but they are genuine eye-witness material and, as such, of possible interest to a generation to whom the great and lovable man in whose praise they were written can only be a name.

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Osman Edwards and I left Brussels at 8.57 a.m. on the morning of Good Friday, April 10th 1914. The day was slightly overcast and there was a little rain between Mons and Dour, at both of which places we had to change. A little train took us from Dour, stopping about 11 o'clock at Angreau, a wayside halt in a wood. On the platform was a slightly built, rather short figure in a round grey felt hat, a dark brown overcoat and a grey suit. This was Emile Verhaeren. His back was rather bent, but he moved with alertness and vigour. The face was deeply lined about the eyes and forehead; brilliant eyes, now sparkling with laughter, now alight with eagerness, shone behind gold-rimmed pince-nez; the finely-cut rather large mouth and sharp keen chin were hidden by long drooping moustaches, light brown heavily streaked with grey. As we alighted he shook me by the hand and kissed O.E. on both cheeks. As he removed his hat to do this, one saw that his hair, thick and wavy, was also heavily grizzled. He was within six weeks of his fifty-ninth birthday.

Carrying our bags, we followed him down a steep woodland path between poplars, oaks, birches and much undergrowth, the ground carpeted with green and thickly sprinkled with daffodils, bluebells and yellow primulas. V. spoke in beautifully clear French—about our journey and about his last sight of O.E., whom he had known for fifteen years. Now and then he would break off and point to some flower, or stop to listen to a birdsong. We crossed an old bridge about which he made a simple little joke, smiling

frankly at us through his glasses. He talked easily and with unfailing skill—bridging awkward pauses (we were collecting our French and I, at least, was shy) with apt queries or simple anecdotes, but always listening courteously when we spoke.

A walk of ten minutes brought us to a house of mellowed brick, of which one end is two-storied, while the rest is of one story, with dormers in the roof. It faces North and South; on the southerly side, the house being joined by a wall and barn coming rectangularly to its western extremity, a wide grass-grown and partly-paved yard runs to a low wall, through which a gate leads into fields and woods. In the yard were a few hens, two tabby cats and a huge fawn-coloured mastiff. The two-storied section of the house is occupied by a farmer named Laurent and his wife, and it was here we had our rooms—large, clean and empty, with views on to the woods and fields. The lower end of the building has been converted by V. into a small house. The roof, with deep eaves, is of grey slate.

At the entrance of the yard we were met and greeted by Madame Verhaeren. Also small and slightly built, she has dark hair and skin, gentle brown eyes and a shy quiet manner. We were brought into our host's house, down a passage hung with various lithographs and into his study. This is a small room facing north. On the walls hang oils and water-colours by van Rysselberghe, Laermans, Montald (a portrait of V.), Meunier, Madame Verhaeren and others, and a framed letter from Mallarmé to Verhaeren. A table covered with a red cotton cloth, an open stove, a tall walnut chest with drawers and another lower chest (both of the same Belgian xviii century design), several chairs mostly plain and without arms, composed the principal furniture. Two small bookcases full of books, and a litter of paper on the table, among which were an inkstand and pens, made up a business-like and cheerful little room.

We talked and looked at books, of which many were very beautiful *éditions de luxe* of V's own work, others translations of his poems into German and Russian, others

inscribed copies from his innumerable writer-friends. He showed us his Russian versions, pointing out with perfectly unaffected satisfaction that he was included in a cheap world history of literature, that his books were used in schools. I remember him saying an interesting thing—that everywhere in Russia he had been greeted for the *political aspect* of his poetry—that is to say, that it was the revolutionary and socially-stimulating sides of his work which appealed to the Russians.

During our visit both he and Madame V. spoke a lot about Russia, where he had given a course of lectures the previous winter. They were entertained regally, and the splendour and display caused them great discomfort. Throughout the depth of winter they received enormous bunches of glorious longstalked roses, and were everywhere given peaches and strawberries. Both of them shrink from this kind of ostentation, and came to dread the banquets and deputations. They disliked the display all the more when they visited the poorer quarters of Moscow and St Petersburg, and found men, women and children half naked in the bitter weather. The working men were only on one occasion allowed to hear him lecture. Often also the students were forbidden. On the occasion when both classes were present, a woman was speaking after the lecture and a sudden fracas was heard on the stairs. Someone behind cried out "La Révolution!" The woman stopped a moment, raised her hand, said "Fas encore" and went on speaking.

Of their visit to Warsaw Madame V. told an interesting story. They were invited to a dinner at a very smart club. All high Polish society was present. After a great feast they withdrew to another room. A long table carried coffee in golden and silver urns and priceless porcelain, old liqueurs in valuable cut glass, candelabra and every luxury. A flash-light group was to be taken. The guests—with the Vs in the middle—assembled in one corner. The photographer, wishing to place his camera more satisfactorily, pushed the table to move it. The whole thing fell to the ground—glass



in fragments, liqueurs spilt, cups and decanters broken. A ruin. But the company neither spoke a single word nor gave more than a single indifferent glance at what had occurred. The servants rolled up the cloth containing the debris and removed the whole thing. Conversation was resumed, the photograph taken, and no reference made to the affair.

V's impressions of the Russians were that they were the most cultured and intelligent race he has known. But the basis of their nature is barbaric. They live for the moment entirely, they act on impulse, have no sense of forethought, care nothing for human life. Their culture and aristocratic conventions are those of the ancien régime; their religion an ineffably polite sham. They eat and drink enormously, are immensely selfish and yet foolishly prodigal and generous. The common people cannot rebel until they unite, and they cannot unite until they have a leader and recognise other discipline than mere force. V. in the course of one lecture spoke of the leading races of Europe—and omitted Russia. They were angry and asked him why. He replied that he could not see what Russia had contributed to European advancement and that he was speaking from the point of view of European interests. "Qu'avez vous donc fait pour l'Europe?" he asked them. And they proudly replied: "Nous avons fait la Russie."

When he talks V. is vivid and infinitely winning. His humour appears constantly, with an illuminating smile or even a sudden great laugh. He makes quick gestures; his voice varies all the time and most skilfully. Expressions: c'est étonnant! c'est curieux! notez-vous bien—he uses freely. I was much struck by the freshness of his interest, by his utter absence of dogmatic assurance, by—at times—his look of wistfulness. He asked how well Bithell's translations had been done<sup>1</sup>—and his eyes were appealing like those of a child. Only once or twice (and with perfect justification) did I hear him speak harshly of others, though he would often make a queer little joke at the expense of some

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Belgian Poetry* by Jethro Bithell. Walter Scott, 1911.

acquaintance. Madame V. told us, when he was not there, that he always attributes to others the motives he has himself; that he hates refusing to help people, cannot say 'no' to requests, and is, in consequence, constantly put upon by selfish and greedy persons. His shy but confiding nature is for ever being betrayed. She protects him as best she can, but he resents her suggestions sometimes, blaming her for being uncharitable, when time and again she is shown to be right. Together they are delicious—full of quiet jokes and as much in love with one another as ever. She helps him with his work and letters—writing out all his poems for him to correct, looking after his food and drink, wrapping him up, telling him how much to do and when he will be tired. She calls him "Veraar" or "fils" or "mon cher petit"—and he her "ma bonne", "ma chère", now and again pretending to scold her for not giving him more cheese or coffee. The intimacy continued unbroken by our presence. We were of the family for the time being—made free of the little house (where we took all our meals), unentertained, but always made charmingly welcome.

Our day began with breakfast at 7.15. At 8.30 V. went to his study and worked till 12, while we read or wrote and talked to Madame V., when she was done with her household work, of which she does the main part herself, aided by a very beautiful French peasant girl called Hélène, with whom V. and his wife are on the most friendly terms. Between 12 and 12.30 we would walk with V. in the woods. At 12.30 a large déjeuner, with easy and delightful conversation. In the afternoon a walk. From 5 to 6.30 V. would work again. At 7 o'clock supper. At 9 bed.

The peasants and village folk about Le Caillou adore V. and follow his doings with keen interest. He told us that often the postman or some villager would call his attention to an article about him which he had not himself seen. The beautiful Hélène had been twice to see "Hélène de Sparte" in Paris. Laurent religiously buys all V's books, though he cannot understand them. V. knows the children and natives by name, every one of them, and goes in and out of their

houses to talk to them. He gives everyone the feeling that they are just the people he wanted to see; and consequently those with any good in them are at their best in his presence. His manners are so perfect as to be no manners. His ease was so attuned to the degree of shyness or inarticulacy on our parts, that one felt no conscious adaptation on his—only that it was much easier to make oneself understood than one expected. I can fancy some people ascribing this charming friendliness of intercourse to their own brilliance, and never realising that the skill and sympathy come entirely from the other side.

Without being in the least vain, V. is frankly interested in his own work. He gave me many interesting bibliographical data, discussed his forthcoming books, and from a splendid present of MSS. which he gave me, much of interest can be gathered as to his methods of work. I noticed also that he uses a rhyming dictionary. He revises his work for each new edition, and shows signs of wishing to tone down some of the violence of early expression. This I do not think he always does wisely. But he works over and over again at his poems—published ones included—and, when reading them aloud, the hearer is nearly made to shout with excitement at the passion and conviction of the voice and gesture. The number of paintings, etchings, drawings and photographs which have been made of him is immense. He is eager with offers of new ones for use in translations of his books, but rejects all those which do not show the wrinkles or which attempt to make his face younger than it is.

It was, I think, another expression of his characteristic tact that on the eve of our departure, when I at least was very gloomy, he told several humorous stories, among them one of Stobach the painter, sitting on a siren in a fog on the coast to paint, and nearly going off his head when it went off suddenly. He also related to us on our last walk the tale of the lord of the manor galloping to the top of the Caillou-qui-Bique itself (a great rock which slopes with the strata strongly to northwards—*biquier*, in this case, meaning “to

slope"). In his joy in the fine horsemanship, and in his admiration of the striking nature of the deed, V. showed himself the poet of *Les Héros*, *Petites Légendes* and *Philippe II*. His romanticism and love of heroic deeds are blended with a tremendous faith in humanity, which give him a political creed far in advance of the time. He is a socialist, but would have all "noblesse". To him the fine nature is the thing that matters—a creed many profess, but few practise as he does.

The eternal freshness of his interest is astonishing. He spoke constantly of the flowers, of the budding trees. He called our attention to a small stream running into the larger one—to the sudden turmoil of the junction. He spoke strongly against training animals, against shooting, against wanton picking of flowers only to throw them away. Madame V. told us that from his balcony at St. Cloud he was watching Santos Dumont fly round the Eiffel Tower, and saw his fall. He cried out and was terribly upset—ran to the local Aero Club and telephoned for help—was almost ill with the possible tragedy. I noticed that he spoke little to the dogs or cats we met—hardly at all. In his poems also there are few allusions to animals apart from humanity. He praised the action of George V in offering to give evidence against Mylius, and of Poincaré for appearing in the Caillaux-Calmette case. He spoke highly of the good sense of Albert of Belgium, of whom he is a close friend (and whom, oddly enough, we saw at Ostend on the way home, for he travelled in the same train). V. is strongly anti-clerical, but I never heard him speak contemptuously of any church apart from politics. Brought up as a rigid Catholic, reaction does not seem to have given him the usual bitterness.

England he loves, with that moving love of foreigners who never receive the least encouragement from her. London used to fascinate him; but he fully realises how culturally behindhand the country is in comparison with France.

Of painting he is very fond, admiring specially Manet (several of whose lithographs hang in the hall at Le Caillou),

Renoir, Lautrec, Cézanne, van Gogh and Gauguin. The Pointillistes he knew personally and liked, and his remarks on them were always in terms of personal affection. Cubists and Futurists he spoke of with rather amused interest. Such of Marinetti's books as he had read he described as powerful but totally mad. Of the Belgian artists Meunier and van Rysselberghe he was a close friend; Bauer he greatly admires. Equally Daumier, Monticelli (by whom he has two pictures at St Cloud), Greco and the Primitives (especially Breughel and Giotto); also Constable and Turner. He spoke familiarly of the galleries of Europe—of London included—and said the Rembrandts at the Hermitage were the finest he had ever seen.

Two remarks indicated his keen eye for colour—that the snow in Russia was so brilliant in its whiteness that the little white horses against it looked *green*; and that he was struck by its luminosity “as though it were lighted from within, and threw the light outwards, not, as with us, where the light is clearly reflected from the sun and air.”

Of music Verhaeren spoke little (there is no piano at Le Caillou) but said he had seen wonderful opera and ballet in Russia. He is interested in the theatre and staging—showing great familiarity with the latest movements. He is a great feminist, admiring the freedom of girls in America and England, condemning inequalities of divorce and opportunity between the sexes. But he said he dreaded that sudden emancipation would bring the same evils as have European ideas suddenly thrust on Eastern peoples—temporary chaos.

He knows his district and its history absolutely, always supplying stories or pointing out landmarks as we went about. Reasons of health had caused him to give up smoking a pipe, and also compelled him chiefly to drink milk at meals. Occasionally he would drink a glass of champagne and one of hydromel afterwards. He loves cheese and coffee—though of the latter he was not allowed by his wife as much as he wanted.

Both of them accompanied us to the station and kissed

us on both cheeks before we got into the train. My last impression was of a waving grey hat and a cheery shout, as V. turned to go down into the deep little valley between the green streaks of the tree trunks.

Now that many years have passed since those ecstatic days at Le Caillou, I can relate what was perhaps, to the youthful enthusiast honoured by the kindness and friendship of this famous man, the most exciting incident of all. At the time, and for obvious reasons, not a word could be said.

We were talking of artists, and he was telling us about Constantin Meunier, Belgium's most renowned sculptor, who had died not long before. Suddenly he turned to me and, with the twinkle behind his glasses which was among his most endearing characteristics, asked whether I would like to possess a Meunier statuette. "*Ça vous reviendra à vingt cinq francs*" he said. He took down a book of pictures of Meunier's work and, turning the pages, pointed here and there to a specimen. I could have one of those, he said, or that one or that one. . . . Four or five in all were indicated, among them the well-known figure of the young miner standing with his hands on his hips and wearing a hood. Completely mystified and suspecting a gentle little joke, I chose this simple and powerful work. Verhaeren put the book away and said: "Good. We will fetch it this afternoon. Give me your money now."

At three o'clock, in the full heat of a brilliant afternoon, he took me by field paths through flowery meadows. Not a soul was to be seen. We arrived at a cottage, half covered by some flowering creeper, and, going round to the back, Verhaeren rattled his stick against a grille set in the wall near the ground and presumably ventilating a cellar. The grille swung open, and a long parcel wrapped in newspaper was handed out by an unseen hand. Back at Le Caillou we removed the newspaper and there was the statuette—about twenty inches high, of bronzed plaster, with Meunier's signature clear upon the base.

"It is perfectly genuine", said Verhaeren. "Cast from Meunier's original mould"—and he proceeded to explain. When Meunier died, his belongings and copyrights passed into the hands of some relation who had been on bad terms alike with the sculptor and his artist friends. This man, who had for years watched with disgust the generosity and indifference to money of his gifted relative, proceeded immediately to shut out the former intimates of the dead man and to exploit by every possible means the profits to be made out of his work, charging fantastic prices for specimens, refusing permission for reproductions save at exorbitant fees. This insult to Meunier's memory so incensed his friends that they organized a burglary and stole from the studio a few of the original moulds. Since then, to the furious mortification of the greedy heir and in order, while spoiling his market, to get for Meunier's work the wide dissemination he himself would have desired, they made secret castings from these moulds and sold them at a purely nominal price to persons who could be trusted to keep silence.

My pride at being admitted to the select company whom Meunier's friends (and in particular Verhaeren) considered worthy of confidence may be imagined. The statuette, in several layers of brown paper, could not have been brought to England with more scrupulous care had it been a live baby. It stands on my table to-day as I write this account of its origin.

I am reminded by a letter I wrote my father from Le Caillou on April 11 1914, of a fact I had entirely forgotten—that prior to my visit to Verhaeren he and my father, with me as intermediary, had broached the subject of a lecturing tour in England. This was to start under my father's auspices at Leeds and thence to range where ever opportunity offered.

"You'll love him (I say in this letter). You'll also love his wife who will I think come with him to England and stay perhaps a little longer at Leeds if you can do with her, while he tours the north."

The lecture tour came off, but in circumstances very different from those anticipated. Within six months of my visit to them Emile and Marthe Verhaeren were refugees in England. It was a privilege to be able in a small way to return their hospitality, and to assist in making arrangements for lectures up and down the country, which would at least bring in some money for the at present homeless fugitives. So long as the German threat to Paris persisted, there could be no question of their returning to their winter home in St. Cloud, and in the meantime they were literally destitute. Slowly the international importance of this elsewhere famous man penetrated the generous but insular minds of our grande bourgeoisie; and, once the ball was set rolling, Verhaeren had as many offers of hospitality and lecture engagements as he could cope with.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1915 the Verhaerens were able to return to France, where they remained until that dreadful evening in November 1916, when a stupid and shocking accident in the station at Rouen extinguished the lovely spirit of a great poet and a noble man. Poor Marthe Verhaeren lingered on desolately for some years after half of herself was dead, and I was permitted, whenever in Paris, to pay her a visit in the Rue Montretout, on the hill above the tram-terminus in St. Cloud. She has now for several years been once more with her husband, and to "Les Heures Claires", Les Heures de l'Après-midi" and "Les Heures du Soir" have succeeded "Salut en Immortalité."

Borrowing the idea from P. M. Jones I will, as he does, conclude this tribute to a venerated friend with the fine portrait sketched by Sir Edmund Gosse at the Verhaeren Commemoration at the Royal Society of Literature in the spring of 1917. Gosse thus described the poet's "wonderful presence":

"The dark antelope eyes set in the pale face that was scored and ravined with sorrow; the great Gaulois moustache that fell over the corners of the sensitive and noble

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the events of these months in England is given by P. M. Jones in his excellent *Emile Verhaeren*, Milford, 1926.



mouth; the many-wrinkled forehead that seemed the casket in which were locked all the medicines of human hope and all the poisons of human anxiety.”

He concluded with these lines:

I found him whom I shall not find  
Till all grief end,  
In holiest age our mightiest mind,  
Father and friend.

## Letters

“ A L L H O R R I D ? ”

JANE AUSTEN AND THE GOTHIC ROMANCE

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### I

“When you have finished ‘Udolpho’ (said Isabella Thorp) we will read ‘The Italian’ together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.”

“Have you, indeed (cried Catherine). How glad I am! What are they all?”

“I will read their names directly—here they are in my pocket-book: ‘Castle of Wolfenbach’, ‘Clermont’, ‘Mysterious Warnings’, ‘Necromancer of the Black Forest’, ‘Midnight Bell’, ‘Orphan of the Rhine’, and ‘Horrid Mysteries’.”

“Are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?”

“Yes; quite sure.”

TO THESE few lines from *Northanger Abbey* seven novels, which would otherwise have faded into oblivion, owe a rueful immortality. So long as Jane Austen is read—which will be for as long as there are readers at all—the titles at least of *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont*, *The Mysterious Warning*,<sup>1</sup> *The Necromancer or The Tale of the Black Forest*,<sup>1</sup> *The Midnight Bell*, *The Orphan of the Rhine* and *Horrid Mysteries* will survive as tiny stitches in the immense tapestry of English literature. Perhaps such miniature and derisive perpetuity is all they deserve. But only after an examination of the books themselves is it possible to endorse or revise Jane Austen’s raillery.

Admittedly—save during its actual pause beneath the Gothic porch of *Northanger Abbey*—such an examination must travel roads which, so far as historical evidence is concerned, Miss Austen herself was content to leave unexplored.

<sup>1</sup> This is the correct title; Miss Thorp was inaccurate.

And yet it seems probable that the lady had in her time more pleasure and even profit from the Gothic romance than she saw occasion to record; and certainly a woman of her sympathy and perception—however ready she may have been publicly to make fun of the excesses of a prevailing *chic*—would in her heart have given to that *chic* as much credit for its qualities as mockery for its absurdities.

For indeed it had qualities, and good historical and psychological justification also. The Gothic romance was not by any means—as it is generally regarded—a mere crazy extravagance. Like most artistic movements it had its primitive incompetence and its over-ripe elaboration; but it sprang from a genuine spiritual impulse, and during its period of florescence produced work of significance and beauty.

## II

Seeing that the ultimate purpose of this essay is to examine the extinction by ridicule, at the hands of genius and otherwise, of the Gothic Romantic movement, it is desirable to establish briefly and clearly the facts concerning the extinguisher-in-chief, Jane Austen, and her real motives in writing *Northanger Abbey*.

Austin Dobson, in his introduction to the Hugh Thomson edition, suggested that although Jane Austen began the novel as a satire pure and simple, she grew so interested in her characters for their own sake, that the tale developed more as a story than as a pastiche and ended by being something of both but not enough of either.

This interpretation of Miss Austen's mind is an ingenious one; and undoubtedly *Northanger Abbey* has suffered in popularity for its two-sidedness. Parody out and out might have encouraged an understanding of the thing parodied; story out and out might have produced earlier chapters of a different and—to posterity—a more easily comprehensible kind.

And yet, if we take the trouble to consider what Jane

Austen was really trying to do and the date of her attempt, can we conceive *Northanger Abbey* other than what it is? Is it a fact that the satirical element fades away, or that the narrative element only gets going when the satire is relaxed? The answer to both these questions depends on an understanding of literary fashion at the time the tale was written, and on an appreciation of Jane Austen's peculiar reaction to that fashion; but they depend more immediately still on a clear statement of the rather complex history of the novel's composition, revision, and publication.

Dr. Chapman, in his fine Oxford edition of the works of Jane Austen, establishes the book's chronology once and for all. *Northanger Abbey* was drafted under the title of *Susan*, in 1798; between that year and 1803 it was revised and completed. Still entitled *Susan*, it was sold for £10 in 1803 to Mr. Crosby, publisher, of Stationer's Hall Court; was announced by him as "in the press", but was never published. In 1816, after the publication of *Emma*, one of the author's brothers bought the manuscript back from Crosby for the sum originally paid. The title was now apparently changed to *Catherine*, and because there is evidence that Jane Austen retained another copy of the book all the while that her first copy was in Crosby's hands, it is by no means sure that small revisions were not being carried out during the whole thirteen years between its original sale and its formal re-purchase. In July 1817 Jane Austen died; and early in 1818 *Northanger Abbey* made its posthumous appearance in company with the author's last completed story, *Persuasion*.

We are therefore confronted with a fiction conceived in 1798, formally complete by 1803, possibly subject to fairly continuous revision between that date and 1816, and for the first time given to the public in 1818, preceded by an "Author's Advertisement" which asked for indulgence, in that "thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period places, manners, books and opinions have undergone considerable changes".

Now Jane Austen was rightly alive to the changes in public taste likely to have taken place during her novel's years of

suspended animation. The odd thing is that she does not seem to have realized that those very changes were in the book's interest—that, in fact, without them it might indefinitely have remained in manuscript and unread. In that same Advertisement she comments a little tartly on the action of a publisher in buying a manuscript but not issuing it in print. "This little work was finished in the year 1803; it was disposed of to a bookseller, it was even advertised, why the business proceeded no farther the author has never been able to learn. That any bookseller should think it worth while to purchase what he did not think it worth while to publish seems extraordinary."

Not so very extraordinary. Indeed, what happened is fairly obvious and might equally well happen to-day.

In 1803 Crosby bought a manuscript by an unknown author, which ridiculed the popular fiction of the day. Maybe he had a secret sympathy with the ridicule, or admired the deftness of the raillery. But before the story arrived at publication, he realized that its flouting of general taste was premature; that the book would be ignored by the critics and that he would lose his money. Further, he may have reflected nervously on the reactions of his other authors, were he to publish a work so contrary in tendency to theirs. He had a healthy list of Gothic Romances<sup>1</sup> and it was surely cheaper to let his impulsive purchase lie than, for the sake of ten pounds, to damage the other titles on his list.

So he put the manuscript away and forgot all about it. By 1816 a re-sale for ten pounds meant so much found money. If he had troubled to look at the thing again, he would in all likelihood have refused to re-sell and have published with profit. If any one had told him it was the work of an author who in the interval had won success with *Pride and Prejudice*, he would certainly have held to his own. But no one told him;

<sup>1</sup> And a particular penchant for "Castles" and "Abbeys". The following titles all appear in his lists and were published by 1818: *Arville Castle*; *Montford Castle*; *The Mysterious Count or Montville Castle*; *The Mysterious Penitent, or The Norman Chateau*; *The Spirit of the Castle*; *The Benevolent Monk, or The Castle of Otalla*; *Brougham Castle*; *Castle Nicobier*; *The Castles of Marsange and Nujer*; *The Castle of Tariffa*; *Eversfield Abbey*; *The Secrets of the Castle*.

he had other commitments; and the opportunity went by. By the time Murray, who had published *Emma*, received the manuscript, it was partnered by *Persuasion*, and the author was not only identifiable but dead. Further, pastiche, which would have been unwelcome in 1803, was by 1818 considerably the rage. Murray, in fact, had Crosby's share of luck.

Since, therefore, the publishing history of *Northanger Abbey* was mainly decided by its quality of parody, it would be illogical to wish the parody away. When, in addition, it be recognized for parody of the most delicate and skilful kind, its absence would obviously not only maim the book but kill it altogether. Consequently, in justice to Jane Austen, we must examine the objects and methods of her raillery and (since the novel had as it were two periods of life) consider them as they were, both when the book was written and when it was published.

### III

The rather general theory that *Northanger Abbey* was designed as a satirical attack on the novels of Ann Radcliffe is one difficult to qualify, and yet not of itself quite the whole story. It is perfectly true (as Dr. Chapman's notes on the novel demonstrate<sup>1</sup>) that certain passages not only of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* but also of Mrs. Radcliffe's earlier novel *The Romance of the Forest*, moved Jane Austen to direct pastiche. But it is doubtful whether, if she had had only Mrs. Radcliffe to laugh at, she would have felt either the desire or the need for such prolonged satire. Ann Radcliffe, the most influential novelist of the late eighteenth century, was only very incidentally a writer of absurdities; and Jane Austen could not have been the hyper-intelligent person she was and yet have failed to recognize the importance of Mrs. Radcliffe's personal contribution to English fiction. Further, she would not have been guilty of pert incivility toward a contemporary who had always carried her fame with retiring modesty, and was as

<sup>1</sup> Oxford edition, vol. v. 285 seq.

much the despair of gossip-seekers and lion-hunters as ever Miss Austen intended herself to be.

But the contemporary significance of Mrs. Radcliffe was not confined to her own writings. She became, involuntarily and with extraordinary rapidity, the inspiration of a new romantic fashion in novel-writing. Already by 1798—the year when *Northanger Abbey* was first sketched out—there existed a throng of imitators and exaggerators of the Radcliffian romance, for whose lack of restraint and very miscellaneous talent Jane Austen could have felt neither respect nor tenderness. Wherefore, partly amused, partly indignant at the pretentious folly of the so-called Radcliffian novelists, and disapproving of their bad influence on the silly young women who read and raved about them, Jane Austen had at once ample material and good justification for her mockery. She could make courteous fun of Mrs. Radcliffe herself and then most bitterly deride that lady's profit-seeking followers.

#### IV

Whence, then, the Gothic Romantic movement which, in the realm of fiction, produced the sombre glories of Mrs. Radcliffe's vision of landscape, the fevered eroticism of "Monk" Lewis, the extravagant nonsense of the sensation-mongers of the decadence?

The answer to this question may be arrived at by a consideration of the analogy between the Gothic romantic epoch from (roughly) 1775 to 1815, and the æsthetic romantic epoch from (even more roughly) 1875 to the beginning of the twentieth century. Both of these epochs represented an uprush of the desire for freedom and beauty and, conversely, a reaction from formalism and dignified reserve. By the middle of the eighteenth century the classical enthusiasms, which in their day had been an inspiration to loveliness and had revitalized European taste, had become set. The influences which had once restored self-respect and alertness to a culture

flaccid and apathetic, had themselves become a cause of impotence. In its eternal swing from liberty to discipline and back again, the pendulum of taste had arrived at the extreme limit of fastidious austerity. It paused, turned slowly on its tracks and then, swinging ever more rapidly toward luxuriance and freedom once again, swept artists, writers, and political philosophers into the seething excitement of a new romanticism.

Precisely similar was the reaction of the late 'seventies, the 'eighties and the 'nineties of last century from the controls and prosperous obtuseness of mid-Victorianism. There was more of economic than of artistic rigidity in the last phase of mid-Victorianism, and in consequence more of jealous political discontent and less of pure aesthetic idealism in the rebels of the late nineteenth than in those of the late eighteenth century. But fundamentally the two repulsions were alike and, strangely enough, assumed in certain details of their history a very similar guise.

With the political aspect of these movements of reaction the present argument is not (save very casually) concerned. But it is essential to remember, when considering the artistic features of the romantic revivals of the seventeen-seventies and of the eighteen-seventies, that parallel with the experiments of painters, poets, and novelists went experiments of philosophers and political theorists, that—having sprung from dissatisfactions both general and profound—the Gothic romance and the French Symbolist Movement were in their small way as much an expression of a deep subversive impulse as were the French Revolution itself and the grim gathering of forces for industrial war.

Of the purely artistic manifestations of these century-apart rebellions, it will immediately be observed that, whereas in the eighteenth century the romantic revival affected primarily literature and architecture, in the nineteenth century the arts most ready to take the new infection were literature and painting. The difference is interesting and, as it happens, helps to prove the statement already made that, in contrast to the eighteenth-century movement, that of the nineteenth



was economic rather than aesthetic, social rather than philosophical. In 1770 architecture and its at that time important subsidiary, landscape gardening, were still within the province of the artist, who could impose his ideas, subject only to the easily-influenced taste of a wealthy and educated patron. But by 1870 the artist had virtually lost control of architectural fashion, having (along with his intelligent Maecenas) been supplanted, on the one hand by speculative builders who built for profit and without other thought than the margin between cost and saleability, on the other, by large commercial corporations whose taste was not only instinctively but also obstinately bad. Consequently the subversive duty of the architect of a hundred years before devolved in the eighteen seventies on the painter of pictures.

A further significant feature of these strangely analogous revolts is that both movements began with a return to a wholly fictitious age of chivalry. It is a remarkable tribute to the power of legend over history that the undoubted squalors and cruelties of the real dark ages should, by lapse of time and with the help of sentimental visionaries, have been transformed into the shining features of a golden age. What Macpherson's *Ossian*, Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, and Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* did for the romantics of the eighteenth century, the Pre-Raphaelites, with the *Morte d'Arthur* as their Holy Writ, did for the aesthetes of a century later.

It is difficult to say which of the two enthusiasms was the more admirable in impulse, which the more self-contradictory in practice. Both began as inspirations, both ended as opiates—and opiates against the very same turbulence which they once inspired. Although the neo-chivalry of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries was a direct outcome of a fundamental desire for change—or, if you wish, of an instinctive destructionism—it won to wide popularity as a way of escape for minds bored with ordinary life, or, more importantly, for spirits uneasy or terrified before the menace of the future. In other words, the persons who launched the new romanticism were in each century prophets of iconoclasm, who lived to see the very language of their prophecies turned to the opposite

use, and their once inflammatory art becoming a drug for harassed minds, a refuge for imaginations in flight from menacing reality.

## V

Seeing that the Gothic-romantic movement was part of a general reaction against an exhausted classicism and that, having started as a tonic against restraints, it ended as a drug against a disagreeable actuality, its methods of self-expression were necessarily varied and even contradictory.

But beneath the multifarious crockets and pinnacles with which the Gothic novelist (working side by side with architects from Strawberry Hill via Sheffield Place, Hagley, and Fonthill to the Brighton Pavilion) adorned his fictional fantasies, lay certain general principles of structure and aspiration which gave not only a unity to the neo-Gothic movement, but also a logic and a respectability. These principles were related directly to the reaction from classical forms and modes of thought and are interesting as demonstrating what "classicism" (as opposed to "Gothicism") meant to the mid-eighteenth century. They show what conventions and formulae grew up from a determination to evolve an art as *different* from the classical as possible, and how this determination produced a stylized Gothic quite individual to the eighteenth century and not at all—either in proportion or design—a reproduction of a medieval original. By way of these principles the student reaches the threshold of a much-needed investigation—an investigation of those specific qualities of "Gothistic"<sup>1</sup> art which entitle it to be regarded as an independent style, alike in building and in literature.

Perhaps the most striking of the conventions adopted and exploited by these eighteenth-century designers, artists, and writers was the convention of the ruin. This was not in itself a novelty. The classical enthusiasts of the preceding decades had returned from Italy and Greece with so keen an appre-

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is preferable to "neogothic", which should properly be applied to Pugin's and, later, to Ruskin's nineteenth-century outbreaks of careful revivalism.

ciation of the survivals of antiquity that they adorned their parks with miniature Parthenons and set up shattered porticoes on the banks of most unsuitable lakes. But these classical ruin-builders regarded their efforts rather as the modern sightseer regards his diary or his sketch-book. They wanted a memento of the grand tour; they wanted to perpetuate in English meadows the glories of a vanished civilization. Consequently their ruins were only ruins because the buildings which inspired them were also in decay; they were not dilapidated for dilapidation's sake.

To the Gothistic eye, however, a ruin was in itself a thing of loveliness—and for interesting reasons. A mouldering building is a parable of the victory of nature over man's handiwork. The grass growing rankly in a once stately courtyard, the ivy creeping over the broken tracery of a once sumptuous window, the glimpse of sky through the fallen roof of a once proud banquetting hall—sights such as these moved to melancholy pleasure minds which dwelt gladly on the impermanence of human life and effort, which sought on every hand symbols of a pantheist philosophy.

Then again, a ruin expresses the triumph of chaos over order, and the Gothistic movement was, in origin at least, a movement toward freedom and away from the controls of discipline. Creepers and weeds, as year by year they riot over sill and paving-stone, defy a broken despotism; every coping-stone which crashes from a castle-battlement into the undergrowth beneath is a small victory for liberty, a snap of the fingers in the face of autocratic power. Indeed, in these early enthusiasms of the Gothistic pioneers may clearly be seen the impulses which, politically, expressed themselves in the French Revolution. The pastoral chic of the pre-revolution aristocracy in France was another aspect of the same inclination; and there is irony, historical precedent and historical sequel in the fact that the very folk who thus gave rein to their instinct for revolt lived to suffer, to tremble, or to flee from that instinct's logical development.

Finally, the appeal of the ruin—as also of the towering crag (another frequent phenomenon of the Gothistic pictur-

esque)—was an appeal of the perpendicular as opposed to the horizontal, alike in structural alinement and in the disposition of shadows. The long lines of classical design, though perpendicular to a certain height, are squared off with the ultimate horizontal of an architrave or with the wide sloping angle of a pediment; the flat surfaces of classical design—whether they be masonry or gaps of shadow—are a part of its style as integral as are columns and projecting cornices. The antithetic pattern in building is one of pinnacles, of fretted surfaces, of intricate broken shadows; and as a basis for such novelty the rebels of the mid-eighteenth century naturally looked to Gothic art and to those aspects of nature, the forest vista and the wooded crag, which were originally the inspiration of Gothic artists.

From this adoption of Gothic forms it was an easy transition to the adoption of similar mental attitudes. The ruin, the bristling silhouette, the flowing untidy lines of piled masonry or creeper-clad rocks became, in terms of emotion, "sensitivity" and an elegant disequilibrium of the spirit. Thus were enthroned alike in visual and in ethical appreciation, ideals of luxuriance, of profuse ornament, and of a rather heady liberty.

Any one who has studied, even superficially, the artistic as opposed to the literary qualities of Gothicism will have noticed how great was the influence of their spiritual origin upon their design and proportion. Houses, churches, pictures, and furniture inspired by the Gothic (or by its easily apprehended twin the "oriental") mode reveal unmistakably the idea behind their Gothicism or their Orientalism. They exaggerate precisely those elements in the basic styles agreeable to the anti-classicists of the time. In Gothistic examples pinnacles abound; the *ensembles* are thickets of rising lines; silhouettes are finely serrated. In the matter of curve, the ogee, carried out with emphasis and enlarged beyond the normal, dominates the pattern. These and other signs betray the real angle of their creators' approach to traditional Gothic forms; they indicate that, to the Gothacist, the medieval convention of ornament was more intriguing than the structural princi-

ples, that—if one may thus express it—the sound of a strange language allured the ear, but its grammar (and indeed much of its meaning) were ignored by minds indifferent to such technicalities.

An identical phenomenon was seen in literature. Dr. Nathan Drake, a prominent apologist for Gothistic poetry and fiction, is agreeably candid on the point. In his *Literary Hours* (first published in 1798) he says:

The style and poetry of ancient ballads must necessarily, as they were the product of a rude age, be extremely unequal. Though the simplicity, the strokes of character, and description be truly interesting, they are for the most part so strangely intermixed with indecencies and vulgarities as greatly to injure their effect. To remedy this inconvenience, to preserve the dramatic cast and manner of these antique compositions, at the same time avoiding their occasional grossness of diction and sentiment, has been the aim of many modern writers.

And he proceeds to print two original poems, which he describes respectively as "an attempt to copy the manner though not the obsolete diction of the ancient ballad", and as "an endeavour to interest through the medium of Gothic superstition".

Precisely thus must Batty Langley have justified his Gothistic designs for houses and for garden pavilions; precisely thus must Middleton have been inspired to recommend "an elegant fragment of an Abbey for use as a cowshed"; precisely thus must Horace Walpole and Bentley have settled to the embellishment—with furniture, carved woodwork and moulded plaster—of the "golden gloom" of Strawberry Hill.

## VI

Of the application to novel-writing of the general principles of Gothistic art much evidence may be found in the seven horrid fictions recommended to the heroine of *Northanger*

*Abbey* by her gushful friend. Within the limits of that brief selection are found three or four distinct "make-ups", assumed by novelists of the day for the greater popularity of their work. This fact strengthens the belief already expressed that Jane Austen's pick of Gothic novels was rather deliberate than random, was made for the stories' rather than for their titles' sake. Chance alone could hardly have achieved so representative a choice; the chooser, had she merely wished to startle by violence or absurdity of title, could have improved without difficulty on more than one of her selection; finally, as we know from her letters, "Our family are great novel readers and not ashamed of being so", and there is actual evidence that the Steventon household read *The Midnight Bell*, Sydney Owenson's early works, and various other fictions. Need we, therefore, hesitate to assume that Miss Austen knew what she was doing when she compiled her seemingly casual list of Northanger Novels? I think not. Indeed we can go further, and claim that it is precisely this purposefulness which distinguishes her as a satirist of fiction from her predecessor Sheridan.

To quote from *Northanger Abbey* without some reference to the famous novel-reading scene in *The Rivals* is hardly possible; but the analogy between the two superficially so similar episodes is more apparent than real. In Scene II of *The Rivals*, Lydia Languish first receives her maid's report of the vain attempt to obtain a fresh and acceptable supply of novels from the circulating libraries in Bath, and later quickly hides her favourite frivolities, lest she offend the visiting Sir Anthony Absolute. Where Miss Austen's Isabella Thorp mentions seven novels, Lydia and her maid mention no less than fifteen.<sup>1</sup> But the moment one attempts a detailed comparison

<sup>1</sup> "Sensibility" novels: *The Reward of Constancy*; *The Fatal Connexion*; *The Mistakes of the Heart* [or *Memoirs of Lady Caroline Pelham and Lady Victoria Nevil*, by de Vergy]; *The Delicate Distress* [by Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths]; *The Gordian Knot*; *The Tears of Sensibility*; *The Man of Feeling* [by Henry Mackenzie].

Novels of pseudo-impropriety: *The Memoirs of Lady Woodford*; *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*; *The Sentimental Journey*; *The Innocent Adultery* [sic, probably *Harriet*, or *The Innocent Adulteress*]; *Lord Ainsworth* [sic, probably *History of Lord Aimworth and Charles Hartford*].

Smollett: *Peregrine Pickle*; *Humphry Clinker*; and *Roderick Random*.

between the two lists of titles, their difference becomes evident. Sheridan is concerned merely to satirize the general novel-reading indolence of the young lady of fashion and her secret preference for spice in fiction. Accordingly, in choosing his samples of contemporary fiction, he is deliberately provocative, blending haphazard the vigorous, the suggestive and the languid, guided by exaggeration of title or genre rather than by subtle varieties in quality of contents. But Jane Austen is more particular in her quarry. She is out after the Gothic Romance, and sets her snares with care and ingenuity.

The Northanger Novels fall into three divisions, of which one is itself sub-divisible. *Clermont*, by Regina Maria Roche, first published in 1798, is the rhapsodical sensibility romance in its finest form. *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *The Mysterious Warning*, and *The Midnight Bell* are terror-novels that pretend—for fashion's sake—to be translations from the German, but are in fact British-made goods in German fancy dress. *The Necromancer* is of this same class, but with a difference: it probably represents the manipulation of genuine German material to create something to English taste, bearing the same relation to its Teutonic original that the *Englische Sportskleidung*, which filled the Berlin shops in the years before 1914, had to the actual shooting and hunting kit worn by English sportsmen—that is to say, the cloth came from Bradford, but the *ensemble* was such as Savile Row had never dreamed of. *The Orphan of the Rhine* is a genuine product of the influence and the genius of Mrs. Radcliffe. It combines sensibility with sensation, being more terrific than *Clermont* but more melodious and picturesque than the terror-novel pure and simple. *Horrid Mysteries* remains—a book not only quite distinct in nature and origin from its fellows, but on a different and higher plane of intrinsic importance and interest. It pretends to be an autobiography; and it is luridly written in its German original, it has been rendered still more sensational by the mingled guile and incompetence of its translator.

Let us now examine in rather more detail these remote but—of their epoch—typical romances. Of Regina Roche's novel,

*Clermont*, the enthusiast could make a manageable essay, so plentiful is its store of period-ornament, so opulent its rhetoric. It is a pure distillation of what was mistakenly believed to be the essence of Radcliffian fiction. Here is Madeline Clermont, the Gothistic super-heroine, a sort of compendium of the qualities and colours, mental and physical, that were most utterly the mode:

She was tall and delicately made, nor was the symmetry of her features inferior to that of her bodily form. Her eyes, large and of the darkest hazel, ever true to the varying emotions of her soul, languished beneath their long silken lashes with all the softness of sensibility and sparkled with all the fire of animation; her hair, a rich auburn, added luxuriance to her beauty, and by a natural curl, gave an expression of the greatest innocence to her face; the palest blush of health just tinted her dimpled cheek and her mouth, adorned by smiles, appeared like the half-blown rose when moistened with the dews of early morn.

This entrancing creature lived with a father (over whose past brooded a shadow of mystery) in a charming cottage not far from a "shattered pile of ruins" in which, after sunset—according to local legend—"horrid noises and still more horrid sights were heard and beheld". But, of course, "though feared by superstition", these ruins were "the favourite haunt of taste and sensibility", and Madeline spent much of her time wandering about the grass-grown courts or climbing to the broken (but apparently still practicable) battlements. From a meeting in this place with an elusive youth of settled melancholy, the adventures of Madeline start on their sensational course. She is taken by an amiable but invalid countess to a distant castle, where she attends routs and makes sylvan excursions, every now and again encountering (and often in the most unlikely places) her mysterious young man, whose name is de Sevignie, and whose occupation is vaguely described as that of an "officer".

One night the countess—in the course of an unexplained



and seemingly irrational stroll—is savagely attacked by masked men in a ruined chapel in the park. She lingers for a few weeks and dies. Terror now takes possession of the stage—a sudden switch from domestic felicity to the dramatics of horror being very characteristic of this type of Gothic romance. Madeline's escape from the once bounteous and hospitable castle by a secret passage to a grotto; her flight thence from the son-in-law of her late benefactress, who has designs upon her virtue, to Paris where (by the machinations of her persecutor) she is lured into a house of ill-fame; her rescue thence; the lengthy revealing of her father's unhappy secret; her realization of her own noble birth and her ultimate union with de Sevignie, (who has at last succeeded in clearing up the mystery of his own identity and emerges as a nobleman of unbounded wealth) compose a narrative than which none is more superbly expressive, not only of the aspiration and absurdities, but also of the attractive qualities of the Gothic romance.

Mrs. Roche knew precisely the ingredients necessary to fashionable fiction, and blended them with admirable dexterity. A summary of the incidental features of *Clermont* is a summary of the compulsory qualities of Gothic fiction. A low burst of music is the accepted interruption of any reverie in a ruin. De Sevignie carries an oboe wherever he goes and continually "rivets Madeline to her seat" on a mossy bank or a crumbling stone by the exquisite taste with which he controls the "soft breathings" of his instrument. Both hero and heroine are "children of sorrow" (this feature, inherited from *Werther's Leiden*, persists like the Hapsburg nose through the family of Gothic romance), and their mutual sympathy has its origin in a common melancholy. The minor characters include a monk, a comic serving wench, a sinister nobleman with dissolute companions, a sprightly girl friend for the heroine, several elderly countesses, and the necessary peasants, banditti, and retainers. Very characteristic also, alike of the school of fiction to which it belongs and of that school's claim to drug uneasy readers against a painful actuality, is the social background of the tale. Mrs. Roche is careful to give no detailed indication of the date of her narrative, and

events of contemporary history, though here and there skilfully implied, are never definitely stated. But the unhampered lives of the nobility, the peasants' submissiveness, and the ease with which persons of quality evade all economic consequences of their very irrational lives, give an impression of the gilded unreality of pre-revolutionary France. *Clermont*, in fact, translates the reader to a vanished paradise of cultured pleasure-seeking where, to those fortunate enough to have been born to wealth and education, all is ease and peace and gaiety. One can understand with what wistful eagerness the elegant but nervous readers of 1798 would follow in this novelist's wake and for a few hours escape the disquietude of fact.

Mrs. Roche was particularly qualified to lull her admirers into a dream of security, because, with all her florid unreality, she had a shrewd sense of social values. *Clermont*, stripped of its Gothic trappings, and when allowance has been made for the modish emotionalism of the time, is really a tale of the day, with characters of recognizable humanity and situations which, exaggeration apart, are not intrinsically improbable. It may be compared with George IV's Pavilion at Brighton, a dignified and normal late-Georgian house, over which has been fitted a shell of frenzied oriental ornament.

Finally this author can manage incident. Her plots are complex as are those of the twentieth-century thriller, and for the rapid handling of complex plot a definite skill is necessary. Just as the best stories of Edgar Wallace owed their popularity to the swift manipulation of successive excitements, so Mrs. Roche deserved her public, if only for her skill as a sensationalist.

One way to an appreciation of the talent of Regina Roche is to pass from *Clermont* to the two pseudo-German stories by Mrs. Parsons: *Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) and *The Mysterious Warning* (1796). These books bear out Professor Oliver Elton's statement that the minor Gothic novelists have no style of their own but a sort of "group-style", as though they were writing mechanically to pattern and according to models approved and consecrated by public favour. Certainly one may without fear of injustice accuse Mrs. Parsons of the

cynicism which gives to the public what the public craves. In others of her books—notably in *Woman as She Should Be* (1793) and in *Women as They Are* (1796), amusing counter-parts to the brilliant satires on men by Robert Bage<sup>1</sup>, she shows a sceptical wit and a capacity for trenchant criticism of her age; but in the "German Stories" selected by Jane Austen she is too occupied with "terror" and with Gothistic *décor* to allow herself much realism. Here and there she betrays personal pre-occupations or prejudice. The type of carefully genial hypocrite so surely attracts her when drawing her principal villains, that one suspects an element of actual experience; she is a militant protestant with the strongest disapprobation of Jesuits and of monastic life; above all, her portraiture of mature ladies of the upper-middle class has the sureness of familiarity. But the few passages which betray the author's gift for downright if astringent character-fiction are so thronged about with the paraphernalia of a terror novel—with cases of mysterious parentage, with horrid crimes, with "death embraces", with swoons and pallid gallantry, and with "children of misfortune" whose lips are sealed by some unhappy secret—that one turns embarrassed from the sight of them, as from bare patches where the basic texture of a well-worn carpet shows through the once luxuriant pile.

Mrs. Parsons' terrorism is further revealed as a mere modishness by her rather contemptuous explanation of all apparently supernatural happenings. Regina Roche, though she did not tolerate actual ghosts, undoubtedly thrilled with her own heroines; but Mrs. Parsons—cold and violent in scenes of almost sadistic cruelty—seems to mock even at herself. Not surprisingly, her determination to give trivial interpretations of pseudo-ghostly phenomena robs her romances of their power to terrify; and while she was undoubtedly in herself a woman of much more humour and of better sense than Mrs. Roche, she was very inferior as a Gothic novelist.

One further point, before we pass to the other Northanger Novels. The contrast between the work and the personalities of Mrs. Roche and Mrs. Parsons serves to illustrate the differ-

<sup>1</sup> *Man as He Is* (1792) and *Hermesprung or Man as He Is Not* (1796).

ence between the two extreme parties of the Gothic Romantic school. Of these the first pretended to prolong, but in fact travestied, the tradition of Ann Radcliffe. In mentality essentially English despite their taste for foreign garb, romantic but in a friendly bourgeois fashion, the pseudo-Radcliffians are like persons who sit about a blazing fire on a stormy night. Their sensitiveness to the beauty of the terrific depends less on the actual quality of terror than on the shuddering but agreeable contrast between the dangers of abroad and the cosy security of home. They listen gleefully to the hurricane without; they even peep between the shutters at the storm or rush into the rain and back again; but all the time they know themselves for safe, and whether they play at running risks of physical catastrophe or of moral degradation, they enjoy the game because it is a game.

Very different is the opposite group—that deriving from M. G. Lewis, author of *The Monk*. Lewis went to Germany for inspiration and, inverting the roles of fear and rhapsody, used romance as *maquillage* for horror. Into the firelit refuge of the Radcliffian novelist the follower of Lewis would fain intrude, haggard and with water streaming from his lank hair, shrieking, perhaps, as would befit a demon of the storm; then, when he had struck the company to silent fear, he would wish to vanish once again into the howling darkness.

Of these disparate tendencies in Gothicism Mrs. Roche and Mrs. Parsons are adequately typical. Mrs. Roche is an out-and-out sensibility writer, but with a Gothic accent. Her own reprobation of crime and terror is as genuine as that of her heroines; she is the direct progenitor of the long and numerous family of story-tellers who have shown innocence and virtue at war with an evil world, but in the end victorious. Mrs. Parsons, on the other hand, is over-cynical for sensibility. She is not so complete a Lewisian novelist as is the author of *Horrid Mysteries* (no British female of the period could have been expected deliberately to shock or stimulate with scenes of fervent fleshliness), but within the limits of her daring and dexterity she does her best. For her, Gothistic mannerism is

the candle in the hollow turnip, and one can see her creep (a little clumsily) from tomb to tomb in the shadowy graveyard of her fancy, waiting a chance to bob out at the nervous passer-by and score her tiny triumph. Jane Austen, then, may be given this further credit for her ingenuity in choosing novels for Miss Isabella Thorp—that not only were the fictions of themselves characteristically various, but they represented (and fairly) the two chief tendencies of the prevailing fashion.

With the next Northanger novel we come to something which, for all the protestations, was rare enough at the time—a genuine and faithful tribute to "the mighty magician of Udolpho". *The Orphan of the Rhine* is a romance in four volumes by a Mrs. Eleanor Sleath, published in 1798 by the Minerva Press and over the writer's name. I know of only one copy of the original edition, and the tale was not included in any of the collections of novels issued in cheap periodical form during the 'thirties and 'forties. The author followed it with *Who's the Murderer? or The Mysteries of the Forest* (1802), *The Bristol Heiress* (1808), and *The Nocturnal Minstrel or The Spirit of the Wood* (1809). As a novelist she stands about midway between Mrs. Roche and Mrs. Parsons. More aggressive than the former, with a greater taste for bloodshed and a greater fondness for violent incident, she is nevertheless an ardent lover of sensibility, her love-scenes rivalling those of Mrs. Roche for elegant verbosity. She takes more pains than Mrs. Parsons, alike with her character and her landscape-painting; but the strongest point of contrast between her and the author-translator of *The Mysterious Warning* lies in their religious convictions. No novelist could well be more pugnaciously Protestant than Mrs. Parsons, but the monks and nuns in *The Orphan of the Rhine* (and they are numerous) are all persons of wise and spiritual disposition. This fact, in conjunction with other fragments of internal evidence, suggests that the author was herself a Catholic.

In matter of *décor* Mrs. Sleath is at once more painstaking and more circumstantial than the author of *Clermont*, and in a wholly different class from the slapdash and conventional Mrs. Parsons. She describes flowers and trees, architecture and

furnishings, in considerable technical detail; shows a knowledge of Italian art; and, if one may judge from the adventures on journey of her various characters, had herself actually travelled the country between the Rhine and Salzburg. This is not to say that Mrs. Sleath permits herself to be unduly bound either by geographical accuracy or incidental likelihood. The Rhenish background of the Orphan's adventures, although recognizable as based upon fact, is in essence such as might be conjured by a lady of fierce imagination living in Twickenham. The small degree of personal experience apart, she tells a tale of wholehearted improbability, without indication of period or suggestion of political and social complications, written in true Gothistic language and crowded with episodes of a genuine Gothistic kind. Her orphan-heroine, Laurette, and her no less orphan-hero, Enrico (their births, of course, are wrapped in mystery) betray the cultivation of their minds by long periods of "pleasing melancholy". They are fortunate in having access to a large number of admirable ruins, amid whose "awful desolation" they enjoy several tragical separations and one rapturous reunion, after "the Orphan" herself has been doomed by a disappointed lover to starve to death in a shattered hunting-box in the middle of a forest. The everyday drawbacks of life under a Gothistic régime are fierce and plentiful. Storms and banditti abound; hapless victims of oppression are found groaning in dungeons; Italian noblemen have debauched habits but splendid appearance. These and other phenomena keep Laurette and her companions emotionally occupied.

In short Mrs. Sleath's sensationalism is fundamentally of the luxuriant and stay-at-home rather than of the simply realistic kind. She clearly enjoyed herself immensely, on her return from an agreeable foreign tour, in sitting beside an English hearth and releasing all manner of villainy and tempest to rage over the hills and forests of Germany.

In the schedule of the Northanger Novels, *The Orphan of the Rhine* must rank as a Rochian romance rather than as a terror-novel. Judged individually it is a strangely attractive absurdity, which exercises a sort of sugary fascination over the

reader. It may be compared with one of those illuminated waterfalls so popular with organizers of exhibitions. The water cascades over coloured lights, and in so doing offends every instinct of good taste and natural liking on which we pride ourselves. And yet the result is undeniably pretty. As with such a waterfall, so with *The Orphan of the Rhine*. It can be judged artificial and tawdry and absurd; but it is nevertheless pleasant, and one lays down the fourth volume grateful to Mrs. Sleath for her entertainment.

*The Midnight Bell*, by Francis Lathom, is, from the point of view of title, almost a Gothic masterpiece. But unluckily the book itself cannot maintain the standard of its superscription. Indeed it is to be feared that the entitlement was a mere device for penny-catching. The "Bell" is a signal for the nightly gathering of rascally monks in a ruined castle, where are kept stolen wealth and other improprieties; but it does not toll at all until the middle of the third and last volume, the earlier and major part of the novel being a melodramatic account of the adventures of Alphonsus (good Gothic name) in search—as usual—of his estates and of the secret of his birth. *The Midnight Bell* is described as "a German Story", and German in setting and in the nomenclature of its counts and castles it certainly is. But the author was an Englishman, and a very witty and ingenious Englishman, although, being a person of quality and therefore inclined to idleness, he never worked harder at novel-writing than was necessary to earn a living, and that was not hard enough to do his genuine talents justice.

Lathom began a career of authorship in 1794 with a romance, *The Castle of Ollada*, following it up with a farcical comedy entitled *All in a Bustle*. *The Midnight Bell* was his third work and second romance, and was published anonymously in 1798.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Owing to a faulty attribution of the novel in Watts' *Bibliotheca Britannica* to George Walker, the bookseller-terrormonger, a wrong authorship and a wrong date for *The Midnight Bell* have crept into many subsequent records (including Miss Birkhead's otherwise valuable and comprehensive work, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*, London, 1921); but the Second Edition of the novel itself, later works bearing Lathom's name, the advertisements of his publishers, and one piece of internal evidence, show to whom credit (if any) should rightly be given.

It would perhaps be unreasonable to quote the quality of Lathom's later work against *The Midnight Bell*; but certainly to any one who comes to it after reading *Men and Manners* (the novel which was published a year later) it is queerly disappointing. Clumsy in construction, humourless, and as mechanically a novel of suspense as ever was serial in a modern daily paper (each of the two first volumes ends with unexplained sensation), the book might be the work of a different person altogether.

Which, indeed, from one point of view it was. Lathom's real talent—like that of Mrs. Parsons—was for contemporary satire, and he “gothicized”, a little to boil the pot, mainly to indulge his private sense of humour. Wherefore such books as *Men and Manners* (1799) and *Human Beings* (1807) have the light-heartedness of a writer using a natural talent, but the “tales of terror” from *The Midnight Bell* to *Italian Mysteries* (1820) are cynical exercises in an assumed manner, and wear their trappings with the false solemnity of a knight in armour at a modern costume ball.

Lathom made no secret of his contempt for enthusiasts for the “mystery” craze among novel-readers (later it became the “sensation-novel” craze; later still the craze for “thrillers”), which he nevertheless exploited with such assiduity and commercial profit. On two occasions he virtually admits that the Gothic romance is to him a mere concession to public taste. Thus, in the preface to *Mystery*, published in 1800, he says: “Nothing is allowed to please generally which does not excite surprise or horror; the simple walks of nature and probability are now despised . . . In the relation of this story I have endeavoured to enlist in my service those powerful assistants—novelty and mystery.” Seven years later, in an amusing preface to *Human Beings*: “Trusting” he says, “that of the numerous novel readers of the present day, an equal proportion at least still retains a relish for what is natural and consistent, I feel no hesitation in quitting the gloomy and terrific tracks of a Radcliffe for the more lively walks of a Burney or a Robinson.”

There is one further excuse for the imperfections of *The Midnight Bell*. Lathom was new to novel-writing, technique has



to be learnt, and the recipe of terror-fiction excluded humour in favour of a double quantity of horrid incident. The neophyte was at least faithful to his models.

Arieno was himself the child of sorrow; he had perceived by the dejected air, hesitating speech and pensive mien of Alphonsus that he was a prey to grief equally with himself."

Again:

I have learnt from sad experience that the most trivial accidents may carry in their train a complicated and inexplicable string of misery.

Again:

I had often indulged similar sensations on spots equally inviting, but they had never produced in me feelings so refined as I that evening felt.

The only chapters in *The Midnight Bell* which hold the attention of the modern reader are those describing the imprisonment of Alphonsus in the Bastille and his escape from its walls. These chapters have the realism of fact, and one is tempted to wonder whether Lathom was not actually in Paris during the early stages of the Revolution—a surmise encouraged by the fact that in 1803 he published a translation of a French work describing the transformation of the Tuileries at the hands of the Jacobins.

*The Necromancer or The Tale of the Black Forest* stands halfway between the sham Teutonism of Mrs. Parsons and Lathom, and the real Teutonism of *Horrid Mysteries*. It is certainly in great part a translation from the German; phrases betray its linguistic origin. But whereas the first edition of 1794 declares the work to be a translation by Peter Teuthold from the original of Lawrence Flammenberg, the records of past German authorship show no trace of any Flammenberg, and the

book itself is so formless as to make a single Teutonic original almost unimaginable. More probably it represents an adaptation, according to the English taste, of an anthology of Black Forest legends. This Flammenberg was perhaps an antiquary or even an ingenious bookseller of Freiburg, who had compiled a collection of terrific local tales. From these a selection may have been made, strung together and Englished by Teuthold. With such an origin *The Necromancer* would naturally be what it is, a conglomerate of violent episodes thrown loosely together and not always achieving even a semblance of logical sequence. For magniloquent descriptions of "horrid" episodes, for sheer stylistic fervour in the handling of the quasi-supernatural, the work can rank high among its contemporaries; but as a novel it is a failure, and probably for the reason that originally it was not a novel at all.

The last—and in some ways the most interesting—of the Northanger Novels is *Horrid Mysteries*. This book, published in 1796, has authentic German ancestry, being a translation of the so-called *Memoirs of the Marquis of Grosse* by a German writer Karl Grosse, who published several works between 1790 and 1800.<sup>1</sup> His marquisate was apparently self-bestowed, and as an alias he used sometimes the name "Marquis of Pharnusa". Though these "Memoirs" are beyond doubt mainly fictional, the book has a strong actuality interest, for it deals at length (resembling in this Schiller's drama of *The Ghost Seer* and Professor Kramer's novel *Hermann of Unna*) with the international intrigues of the sect of Illuminati. To its preoccupation with this subversive and violent group, *Horrid Mysteries* owes a second mention in the work of a contemporary and important author. In Chapter II of Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* we read: "Mr. Glowry slept with *Horrid Mysteries* under his pillow and dreamed of venerable eleutheroarchs and ghastly confederates holding midnight conventions in subterranean caves."

<sup>1</sup> *Erzählungen und Novellen*, 1793-4; *Kleine Novellen*, 1793-5; *Der Dolch*, 1795 (translated into English as *The Dagger*); *Der Blumenkranz*, 1795-6; *Chlorinde*, 1796; *Liebe und Treue*, 1796; *Spanische Novellen*, 1794-5; *Versuche*, 1798, etc., etc.

The hero of *Horrid Mysteries* falls into the clutches of this secret society and, because he cannot help himself, swears the oath and assists at the awful gatherings which diverted the sleeping Glowry. He learns that the conspirators are political revolutionaries who decree death to royal persons; that they are social anarchists who deny all civic responsibility and even the ties of family; that they believe in communizing alike women and wealth; that they enlist in their service the knife of the assassin, the terrors of religion, and the wiles of wanton beauty. Through four volumes the Marquis of G—— seeks to escape and to destroy the evil conspiracy in which he is involved. He travels all the countries of Western Europe, and organizes (if you please) a "Fascist" band to oppose the schemes of the Illuminati. But he is continually thwarted by their far-reaching power, brought back to submission, threatened, made the victim of attempted murder. The result—in English at least—is a strange wild work, dealing unashamedly in the supernatural, possessed of lurid, if inconsequent, power. An ultra-Poëscue tale, told in 200,000 feverish words and illustrated by Gustave Doré in one of his rare but undeniable moments of nightmare genius, would be just such a terrific monstrosity. There is life-story within life-story; the reader seems to assist at a series of apocalyptic visions, which by their sheer opulence of language crush him into gibbering acquiescence. Whatever there may be of folly and even of madness in this extraordinary work, it is in its English version a genuine and powerful Tale of Terror.

There is one further element in *Horrid Mysteries* which, because it concerns the Gothic romance as a whole, claims a word of comment. This is the element of voluptuous love-making which, in the opinion of moralists, besmirched many of the productions of the Minerva Press and came in time to be charged (though most unjustly) against the entire school of Gothic romancers. The truth is that, in so far as Gothic romance tended to fleshliness at all, the element appears only in those works which were modelled deliberately on Lewis's *Monk*. And even *The Monk* is to modern taste absurd rather than alarming in its licence. But there were German originals

(by which Lewis was influenced) and German successors (in their turn influenced by Lewis) which trespassed further into eroticism than English custom would tolerate. It may, I think, be assumed that of such successors *Horrid Mysteries* went as near as any to the limit allowed to an English translator. The love scenes are luscious and detailed beyond even the aspiration of 'Monk' Lewis himself, and I am aware of no Gothistic novel issued in English during the period which can rival it for frank carnality.

## VII

No tribute to her skill and taste could be more justified or more convincing than the result of a comparison between Jane Austen's individual reaction to the follies of contemporary fiction and those of the several other novel-parodists of (more or less) her period. She is of a class apart; and one of the secrets of her pre-eminence is that she had herself enjoyed the victims of her fun. Wherefore, when she mocked, she mocked the more tellingly because fondly and with knowledge.

As much can hardly be said of her fellow-parodists, who are rarely sympathetic and never fond. Crabbe in *The Borough* and in *Tales of the Hall*, Peacock in *Nightmare Abbey* and (very much by the way) in *Melincourt*, certainly contrived to combine satire with literature. But neither of these authors carried their satire on fiction far enough really to qualify as competitors, and for comparison we must fall back on candidates of a frankly inferior kind.

Earliest in date is William Beckford, whose two burlesque novels—*Modern Novel Writing* or *The Elegant Enthusiast* and *Azemia* appeared respectively in 1796 and 1797. Their butt is the rhapsodical romance of the Lydia Languish kind, and their quality is largely determined by the peculiar detachment and amateurism of their millionaire author. They are examples of the kind of parody which *Northanger Abbey* is not—buffooneries content to mock by exaggeration and without any pretence of creating a new intelligibility of their own.

Next comes the parody of William Godwin's novel, *St.*

*Leon* (1799), which appeared in 1800 under the title: "*St. Godwin: A Tale of the xvi, xvii and xviii Century*, by Count Reginald de St. Leon." The parodist was primarily concerned to make fun of the republican and libertarian ideas and of the solemn conceit, which to hostile contemporaries were all of William Godwin. But because in *St. Leon* itself are elements of Gothic Romance—Radcliffian forests, banditti, storms and dangers—the parody also has its Gothistic features. The book is often amusing, but its method is crude. Godwin's original is followed carefully; its more stilted passages are printed verbatim and, where possible, turned to ingenious obscenity.

Of the Beckfordian order (and, in comparison with *Northanger Abbey*, even more elementary) is a little book published in 1815 called *Love and Horror: an Imitation of the Present and a Model for all future Romances*, by "Ircastrensis". This farcical absurdity bears precisely the relation to Gothic Romance which *Modern Novel Writing* bears to the fiction of Rhapsody. Every affectation is exaggerated, every violent incident made trebly violent. The author specializes in the Monastic school of Gothistic novelists, among whom he easily finds victims themselves so ludicrous that little enough of distortion is needed to produce the nonsense required.

This is not the whole tale even of English Gothistic parodies. Miss Birkhead<sup>1</sup> records a work published in 1819—a burlesque *Mystery of the Abbey*—which would seem of a similar kind to *Love and Horror*. Miss Killen<sup>2</sup> refers, without giving a date, to *More Ghosts*, by a Mrs. Patrick. Perhaps others will gradually come to light.

The series must here terminate with a mention of two titles—of which the second is at least remembered, and a very violent specimen of its class. The first—Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810)—presents agreeably enough the foolish transports of a clergyman's daughter, bemused by too much novel-reading; but it is light-weight conventional stuff, over which we need not linger. Much more

<sup>1</sup> In *The Tale of Terror* (quoted above).

<sup>2</sup> In *Le Roman Terrifiant ou le Roman Noir*. Paris, 1924.

important is the second—E. S. Barrett's *The Heroine*, published with immediate success in 1813.

*The Heroine* is an extravaganza which it would be possible to treat with an extreme of critical solemnity. It would even be possible to claim for it an ancestry of unchallengeable eminence. One might argue that the adventures of Cherubina, in so far as they are a pastiche of an exaggerated romanticism, descend directly from the adventures of Don Quixote, that Barrett's burlesque of the rhetorical fiction of his time suggests a logical comparison with Scarron's *Le Roman Comique*. But apart from the disproportion between such an argument and its theme, any portentousness of handling would do *The Heroine* at once more and less than justice. The book's true appeal is rather to the amateur of parody than to the literary student; Cherubina's absurdities can better be enjoyed as absurdities than as incidents in the tale of fictional comedy; and the modern reader will more profitably survey and relish *The Heroine* if he be assured that the book is not a "period piece" at all, but a straightforward burlesque to be judged by standards of burlesque and by no other standards whatsoever.

In order to assure him, it is only necessary to draw an analogy between this novel and a work of parody familiar to and beloved by thousands at the present day—W. S. Gilbert's opera *Patience*.

The opera of *Patience* with its

Pallid and thin young man,  
[Its] haggard and lank young man,  
[Its] Greenery-yallery  
Grosvenor Gallery  
Foot-in-the-grave young man;

with its languishing maidens, and its exquisite hero in liberty velvet who can

... walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily  
in his mediæval hand,

still retains its hold on recurrent and delighted audiences. It has, of course, the less "dated" charm of Sullivan's music to help prolong vitality; but many of those who crowd to listen and laugh and cheer genuinely enjoy the pastiche of the æstheticism of the eighties, because they realize the absurdities of that now almost legendary reality. Barrett's *Heroine*, on the other hand (and despite the fact that it has been twice reprinted during the present century), is to-day little read, save by those few students of past literature who, having sufficient interest in the novels travestied, care to relish its often brilliant humour.

Admittedly, where Jane Austen delicately derides, Barrett treats his victims to sustained and pitiless bludgeoning; admittedly he combines Radcliffe and Roche in a single hyphenated epithet, and speaks of "Schedoni, Vivaldi, Camilla and Cecilia" in one breath as though all are characters from lurid romances of an identical kind. But a certain lack of finesse in choosing his prey is inevitable to the parodist—particularly to a parodist so virulent and so pitiless as Barrett—and one must accept his wholesale proscription of victims for the sake of the humours of the actual *auto-da-fé*. And they are genuine humours if a little protracted. The "olde Englishe" nonsense of Letter xvi; the ridiculous persecution of poor Lady Gwyn by the squatters of Monkton Castle; the rhapsodical debate in Letter xxxv between Cherubina and Sympathina about blushing, tears, moonshine and colouring of hair ("Such a flow of soul never was") and, best of all, the interpolated narrative of "Il Castello di Grimgothico" (in the first edition Letter xxxi<sup>1</sup>) are all in the hallowed tradition of extravagant burlesque.

But burlesque at its best is of a lower order than satirical comedy, and *Northanger Abbey* is the perfection of satirical comedy. The contrast can be demonstrated by an amusing process. *The Heroine* is, from the first sentence to the last, manifest Harlequinade. No one can possibly mistake it for what it is—an exercise in slapstick, agile, witty and malicious.

<sup>1</sup> In the extensive alteration of his text carried out by Barrett between the first and third editions of *The Heroine* this narrative was dropped out.

But *Northanger Abbey* is something very different. The first chapter is deft and highly condensed. Because of its demure restraint, it might pass for seriously meant, unless the reader has some knowledge of the type of fiction satirized. The words read sensibly enough; but they permit the construction *by opposites* of figures and incidents which present, more or less complete, the cast and décor of a regulation Gothistic novel. Let us attempt some such inversion and see what happens.

Catherine is the fourth child of a poverty-stricken clergyman of violent manners, whose face, although seamed with temper, still bears traces of the wonderful beauty of his youth. Catherine's mother had died in giving her birth, so could not gaze proudly on the lovely blossoming of her only daughter, who, growing up solitary in her father's remote and ruinous home, spends her time feeding her canary, watering her beloved roses, gathering wild flowers and evading her father's attempts to lock her in her room. She is a child of amazing intellectual capacity, excelling equally at music, dancing, and writing poetry, and combining with these talents a maidenly refinement and serenity which would have astonished the neighbours, had there been any in the lonely and wooded valley where she lives. She is continually sketching, with heightened colour, the profile of a handsome youth who oddly enough comes into her life very early in the first volume of the story and, although for a long while a mysterious figure whose birth is shrouded in mystery, turns out finally to be a nobleman of immense wealth and owner of half the county.

Thus, brutally summarized, would the average Gothic romance of the late seventeen-nineties open and proceed. Jane Austen, by turning everything topsy-turvy, gets her effect, but leaves herself with a perfectly normal English girl of normal English origin, ready to start on a visit to Bath and thence to a country house in Gloucestershire, of which visits every incident, potentially sensational, is to prove ordinary and explicable. This, indeed, is parody of genius.

Barrett was a very clever man, with a liking for ridicule



and a talent for tart self-expression. But he was not a genius, nor ever pretended to be. He would probably have been the first to admit that in some of his tomfooleries he added little if anything to the antics of his originals. Regina Roche at her most enterprising, Charlotte Dacre, T. L. Horsley Curteis and a host of anonymous writers of "Tales from the German", of "Tales of other Times", and of such lureful fictions as *The Midnight Embrace*, *The Abbot of Monserrat* or *The Pool of Blood*, and *The Imaginary Adulteress*, go to lengths of rococo emotionalism and hectic melodrama that would hardly be credible, were they not set forth in solemn black and white. Horror is piled on horror; monks and banditti, each one more sinister than the last, lurk in vaulted corridors or haunt the gloomy caverns of some mountain wilderness; defenceless girls go wandering about Europe, evading by the narrowest margin disasters and dishonours of the gravest kind. And as the incident of the Gothic novel increased in violence and improbability, so did the language grow more florid and excitable. Indeed stylistically the originals contrive to excel the parody. Thus: "I shall be again, if not happy, at least tranquil. The tears I wipe from the cheek of misery will dissipate my own, and the sigh I suppress in the bosom of affliction will prevent mine from rising."<sup>1</sup> Or thus: "Your conduct, monk, convinces me that your intents in bringing me to this spot are of a dark and base nature. But you shall find yourself foiled of your endeavours. My cries shall alarm the watchful sentinels, and their honest fury may cause you dearly to repent of your present insulting comportment."<sup>2</sup>

Such phraseology as this—the sentences have been chosen almost at random, so typical are they of a fiction once widely fashionable and seriously absorbed—might well discourage all but the most intrepid parodist. Perhaps Barrett was wise to confine his extravagance to incident and to leave hyperbole alone.

But it is worth observing that *style* has survived, where

<sup>1</sup> *Clermont*, by Regina Maria Roche.

<sup>2</sup> *Manfron*, or *The One-Handed Monk*, by Mary Anne Radcliffe (not Ann Radcliffe, but an unscrupulous copyist—alike of name and theme).

monks, banditti, and mysterious vaults have mouldered into disrepute. It is sufficient to read the sentences quoted to realise that, between the eighteen-teens and the eighteen-nineties, the stream of florid romanticism did not run dry. It split into several channels, one of which went underground and emerged, virtually unchanged and easily recognisable, in a remote Irish village. The late Amanda Ros (she took her pen-Christian name from her favourite book *The Children of the Abbey*) was a perfect recrudescence of the "horrid" novelist, and her *Irene Iddesleigh* a sumptuous re-blossoming of Gothistic fiction.

What became of the other channels—in other words the posthumous history of the tale of terror—is a subject in itself. During the first period of its eclipse (after the historical romance of the Scott type had ousted it from public favour) it fell deep into obscurity and deeper into crude violence and sensationalism. An occasional brilliance—such as *Tales of the Wild and Wonderful* and de Quincey's *Klosterheim*—lit up, as does a late gleaming star thrown off by a spent rocket, the darkness of its downward rush. But such isolated beauty could not check the rush or break the final fall. The Gothic novel crashed, and became the vulgar "blood". But if the once despot of the boudoir became the servant of the chap-book-maker in the slums of Seven Dials; if *The Children of the Abbey*, *The Romance of the Pyrenees*, *The Bravo of Bohemia*, and the rest sank from the drawing-room floor to the sourest recesses of the basement—the spirit of melodrama and of terror (which is only in rousing guise the spirit of escape) persisted unsubdued and persists to this day. Mantalini, as an individual, ended his career in a laundry-cellar turning a mangle for a virago; but Mantalini, as a symbol of male selfishness and of the power of handsome bounders over foolish women, will never die. Thus at any stage between 1820 and to-day may be found flourishing, in one form or another, the tradition that once was Regina Roche, that was to become Edgar Wallace and Dennis Wheatley and Sydney Horler. Analyse any one of the sensational novels popular during the last hundred and twenty years, and you will find

that it represents precisely that blend of recognisable probability and delicious threatening horror, which characterized the romances of the true Gothiſtic period and gave them supremacy over educated folk, many of whom knew better.

*My acquaintance with Archdeacon Wrangham was based on a shared hobby, and was an affair of chance at that. In the course of collecting as many as possible of the books and leaflets printed between 1813 and 1822 under the auspices of Sir Egerton Brydges at the Lee Priory Press, I acquired the author's own copy of A Few Sonnets attempted from Petrarch in Early Life, written by Wrangham and issued from Lee Priory in 1817. This copy had been grangerized by the Archdeacon, and contained, among other material and apart from the book's actual text, three variant title pages, a number of single leaves of bright pink paper printed on one side with translations from Petrarch signed "F.R.S." (i.e., Wrangham himself), and a 4to sheet of four leaves, bearing a translation, similarly signed, of Petrarch's Letter to Posterity. Evidently the man had been a bibliographical beaver—a collector of oddities and fragments of book-making, an amateur of coloured paper, and by and large a person with whose tastes I sympathized.*

*Not long afterward Mr. H. V. Marrot (subsequently the bibliographer of John Galsworthy and director of the publishing house of Mathews and Marrot) offered for sale through the well-known rare book dealers Elkin Mathews Ltd. (of which firm he was an associate) a collection of Wrangham books and leaflets. It was by no means a complete collection; but it included a number of items on coloured paper (of which six to twenty-five copies only had been printed) as well as private issues of a kind to appeal to a bibliophile who, a century later, shared the Archdeacon's love for unobtrusive rarity. From that moment I became a collector of Wrangham; and it was not long before interest in his printed work developed into admiration of his personality and curiosity to find out as much about him as possible. Because he was a retiring man, content to perform his duties toward his Yorkshire parish and archdeaconry and to enjoy the unsociable delights of bibliomania, the assembling of sufficient information to justify an attempt to draw a pen-portrait was not an easy task. What could be achieved by a mixture of good fortune and industry, the following pages show.*

## PART I: BIOGRAPHICAL

FRANCIS WRANGHAM was born on 11th June 1769 at Rays-thorpe, near Malton, in Yorkshire. He was the only son of an important farmer; and the care taken with his education indicated that the father had a greater respect for things of the mind, and a more definite ambition to train the boy for intellectual pursuits, than might normally have been expected from a man of his position. However, the family was an old one and had at one time been more than prosperous;<sup>1</sup> so that no doubt George Wrangham's feeling for education was in part traditional. Francis took occasion, when enlarging and annotating the Life of Bacon for his "New Edition" of *The British Plutarch* (published late in 1816), to add a footnote of some family significance to the account of the corrupt practices to which Lord St. Albans was liable. This footnote—whose elegant diction has a characteristic undertone of half-humorous astringency, not unconnected, one suspects, with Wrangham's own unhappy experience of a Lord Chancellor's sense of justice—refers to Bacon's admitted dishonesty at the expense of a man who may have been a connexion of the Archdeacon's family, "the able and unhappy Wraynham or Wraynham". Wraynham was at odds before the House of Lords with a certain Sir Edward Fisher, and this gentleman (acting on a hint from a henchman of Bacon's) presented the Lord Chancellor at a critical moment with one hundred and sixty pounds' worth of [velvet] hangings. Judgement was duly given in his favour. Wraynham, not unreasonably, complained to the King,

<sup>1</sup> It is believed that the Wranghams descend from the owners of the manor of Wrangham on the Northumbrian border and migrated (perhaps during the sixteenth century) to Durham. Certainly a direct ancestor of Francis Wrangham settled in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1619 and founded a family of property-owning yeomen. This explains the Archdeacon's statement, in the brief manuscript autobiography which he wrote in his interleaved copy of Zouch's *Sketches of Yorkshire Biography*: "his ancestors had been yeomen, originally from the Bishopric." Any sort of connexion between the various north-country Wranghams and the Norfolk family of the same name can only be presumed. No details can be established.

The gradual failure of the family fortunes since the seventeenth century is believed to have been mainly due to its prolific nature and not, as the Archdeacon liked to claim, to the persecution of George Wraynham by Bacon.

but merely succeeded in making matters worse. He was "prosecuted in the horrid Court of Star Chamber, was fined and imprisoned (even unto death), and had the still heavier misery of seeing his family reduced from affluence to beggary. . . . Bacon knew Wraynham innocent and injured, himself guilty and the Lords abused and misled; and yet he suffered him and his family to sink under calamities from which, after a long lapse of nearly two centuries, they are but just, under the providence of God, beginning slowly to emerge. . . ." <sup>1</sup> "Mr. Chalmers' short statement", adds Wrangham (the reference is of course to the *Biographical Dictionary*), "in which he calls the injured party 'Wrenham', does not appear to be drawn up with his accustomed candour and accuracy".

Between the ages of seven and seventeen young Francis Wrangham was schooled at three different places in Yorkshire by three excellent clergymen; and in October, 1786, entered Magdalene College, Cambridge. In his third term he won Sir William Browne's Gold Medal for Greek and Latin epigrams. <sup>2</sup>

In October 1787, at the invitation of Dr. Joseph Jowett, professor of Civil Law, Wrangham migrated from Magdalene to Trinity Hall, of which college Jowett was Fellow and Principal Tutor. He was elected a "minor scholar". In January 1790 he graduated B.A., was Third Wrangler, second Smith's Mathematical Prize Man, and winner of the Chancellor's Classical Medal. He remained in Cambridge for awhile taking pupils, acted as private tutor to the son of the Duke of Manchester from July 1791 to the end of 1792, and then returned to Cambridge, expecting (as did every one of his acquaintance, and as the Statues of Trinity Hall seemed virtually to promise) that he would get the next vacant fellowship at his college.

<sup>1</sup> In his private catalogue of his own library, Wrangham made further comment on the Bacon-Wraynham scandal. He possessed a copy of a Tract of 1725: *Wraynham's Case; or a Vindication of Lord Bacon*, on which he added a note, concluding: "The issue ruined Mr. W. His case ought to have been bound in black velvet; as the Libel, it seems, was."

<sup>2</sup> These are said to have been printed in July, 1787. They were certainly included in his first volume of poems designed for publication in 1795.

He took his M.A. in March 1793; and in June of the same year, as he wished to be ordained, the tutors of Trinity Hall gave him a glowing testimonial for submission to the Archbishop of York. He took Holy Orders in July 1793.

Next month there fell vacant a divinity fellowship at Trinity Hall, for which Wrangham applied. He was qualified, according to the statutes, in point of residence and as holding no clerical office of an annual value of more than a stated amount. He was also a "minor scholar" to whom, according to the Founder's wish, preference of election should be given. Nevertheless the fellowship was given, not only to some one else, but some one not even a member of the Hall and already the holder of a profitable benefice.

This wholly unexpected rebuff was deeply mortifying to Wrangham and caused no little excitement in Cambridge. Indeed it became for a time almost a *cause célèbre* and not only in the purlieus of the University. An entertaining literary Who's Who, entitled *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors* and published in 1798 (within five years of the Fellowship incident), makes indignant reference to it:

After acquiring honours almost unprecedented in the University, he [Wrangham] was rejected when the looked-for vacancy was made, on the most pitiful and shameful pretences; and, with a spirit becoming his high desert and its scandalous requital, left the society in the utmost detestation of its principles and conduct.

It is not for posterity to revive dead controversy; but Wrangham's misadventure at Trinity Hall had an important bearing on certain aspects of his career. It undoubtedly influenced his character, and inclined his tastes away from academic society and towards an active priestly career with intervals of secluded study in a comfortable vicarage. It also helped to involve him in the comparatively unsocial hobby of book-collecting. For these reasons—if for no others—the story deserves to be summarized.

Wrangham's successful rival was a certain Reverend John

Vickers, described (admittedly by a friend of Wrangham's) as "far from prepossessing in appearance, awkward and uncouth in manners and with classical attainments of an inferior order." However this may have been, Vickers was undeniably ineligible for election as fellow, because already he held an ecclesiastical place of profit.

Vicker's election had taken place on 1st November; the next day the Fellows discovered their chosen candidate was not eligible, and took counsel with Vickers himself. He promptly resigned his ecclesiastical preferment and on 5th November was re-elected and became a Fellow of Trinity Hall.

Wrangham appealed to the Lord Chancellor (Lord Loughborough). There was an absurd legal argument, in which both sides quoted classical authors *ad nauseam*. Finally the appeal was dismissed, and Vickers confirmed in his new occupation.

Now the Fellows of Trinity Hall made no defence of their action, save that they considered Vickers to be—and Wrangham not to be—a fit and proper person to be a member of the College. They declared (and the plea was accepted) that they were not bound to specify their reasons why Wrangham, *moribus et ingenio*, was unsuited for election. It was, however, generally believed in Cambridge that their real reasons were partly ordinary snobbery, partly subservience to the wishes of the formidable Dr. Isaac Milner, President of Queen's and acknowledged leader of the Tory and Evangelical parties in the University. Wrangham was a "minor scholar", i.e. he ranked in social estimation below the regular members of college; also his intellectual successes at Cambridge may well have been more resented in an unknown youth from the Yorkshire wolds than they would have been in one of more familiar origin. The Fellows of Trinity Hall were choosing a member for their own small community and chose the man they regarded as more likely to be "their kind". Into the bargain, Jowett—the Principal Tutor—was an admiring henchman of the President of Queen's, who had so active a finger in the Trinity Hall pie that the latter college was sometimes described as a "fief" of the former. Vickers was a Queen's man and had



Milner's backing—an additional recommendation, which settled the question out of hand.

But however ready one is to admit the right of the Fellows of Trinity Hall to elect whom they pleased, one cannot approve their methods. They spread the rumour—and were careful to bring it to the ears of the Lord Chancellor—that Wrangham was in sympathy with the French Revolution, was disaffected and disloyal. No description could be less suited to the mature Wrangham who, though attractively liberal in his attitude towards the distressed and the oppressed, was sternly orthodox as a churchman and, if anything, over-respectful to the socially great. One can only conclude that, if in his early twenties he did indeed kick radical heels, it was very stupid of a bunch of elderly dons to take so seriously (or very disingenuous of them to pretend to take seriously) what even then must have been a fairly normal undergraduate and young post-graduate phenomenon.

In any event the rumour was propagated, though with what supporting evidence is not recorded. Possibly reference was made to a pseudonymous and rather foolish work, known to be by Wrangham and published in London in 1792, entitled *Reform: a Farce, Modernised from Aristophanes* by "S. Foote Junior". This playlet, which consists of a dialogue between Tom Paine (representing *Chremylus*) and John Bull (representing *Plutus*), can hardly be called republican propaganda, unless putting into the mouth of Paine sentiments proper to his known views be so regarded. But the tone of the argument is impudently critical of contemporary politicians—even going so far as to charge them with place-hunting and fondness for money. Because a number of the non-resident Fellows of Trinity Hall were at the time Members of Parliament, and because the whole collection regarded Paine and all he advocated as ethically abominable and, in practice, likely to cause them severe personal discomfort, they may well have been sensitive to the argument that the mind behind *Reform* lacked a decent respect for established things.

Some said there was another and a more private reason for charging Wrangham with levity (if with nothing worse),

which influenced Jowett individually and, through him, other members of the college. In circulation at the time was a derisive epigram which in many quarters was credited to Wrangham. It referred to a garden created and then modified by Jowett, and now surviving as a triangular patch of earth planted with shrubs in an angle of the east front of Trinity Hall. Of this epigram two versions are extant. Here is one:<sup>1</sup>

A little garden little Jowett made,  
And fenced it with a little palisade.  
Plants did he set in it, a very few  
And there a little, very little grew.  
And when this little garden made a little talk  
He changed it to a little gravel walk.  
If you would know the mind of little Jowett,  
This little garden doth a little show it.

The other version is quoted by Wrangham himself in the suppressed preface to his first book of poems. He denies flatly that he had anything to do with it, observing with good sense:

Who, that knew my fate to be dependent upon the nod  
of Dr. Jowett, could suppose I would incur the risque of  
being detected as the author e.g. of the following Epigram?  
This *little* garden *little* Jowett made,  
And fenc'd it with a *little* palisade:  
A *little* taste hath *little* Doctor Jowett;  
This *little* garden doth a *little* show it.

Whichever version be the correct one, and whether or no Wrangham were indeed wholly innocent of the joke, it would have been sufficient even to suggest to Jowett that his protégé could thus make fun of him to incline him finally to the side of Dr. Milner's candidate. No doubt the suggestion was made.

<sup>1</sup> A compound of that printed by Gunning in *Reminiscences of Cambridge* and adopted by the *D.N.B.*, and a text printed in H. E. Malden's *Trinity Hall* (Robinson's "College Histories" Series, 1902).

After his appeal had failed, Wrangham left Cambridge. Although throughout his life he was to be a frequent visitor to the city on special occasions, he never forgot his failure at Trinity Hall. Twenty-five years later, when his son was a candidate for a College Fellowship and Wrangham was trying to get support for the boy among his friends, he wrote rather bitterly to one of them, that if he could not do more for his son than he had done for himself, the young man had no chance of election.

It now became urgently necessary for Wrangham to find new means of earning a livelihood. He planned to take in pupils at Cobham (where in 1794 he obtained a curacy) and issued a prospectus, no copy of which seems to have survived. He himself records that he secured three pupils, all sons of West Indian families, at two hundred pounds a year each. But he gladly abandoned tutoring when, late in 1795, he was offered by Humphrey Osbaldeston the six-hundred-pound-a-year living of Hunmanby-with-Folkton, near Scarborough. Osbaldeston had known and liked Francis Wrangham's father and for this reason used his patronage in the young man's favour. Wrangham remarks that Osbaldeston's offer "proved that a pecuniary patrimony is not the only heritage of a son".

Early in 1796 Wrangham moved into Hunmanby Vicarage, which was to be his sole residence until 1828 and thereafter one of two homes. He was in his twenty-seventh year.

Wrangham's career from now onward—outwardly uneventful enough—might serve as a model of intellectual activity, cultivated taste and clerical efficiency. In his private life he had the sorrow early in 1800 of losing his first wife in childbed within a year of their marriage. He designed in her memory, and affixed to the south wall of the chancel of Hunmanby Church, a tablet of beautiful proportions and carefully restrained decoration, which is in striking contrast to its neighbour—a horrid affair in debased Gothic, erected (presumably during the 'forties) to the memory of Wrangham himself "by

his widow and surviving children". The first Mrs. Wrangham—the daughter of Ralph Creyke, Squire of Marton—was only twenty-one when she died. Her baby daughter, Agnes, survived the mother's death, and in due course married the Reverend Robert Isaac Wilberforce, second son of the great Wilberforce. In 1840 he succeeded his father-in-law as Archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorkshire.

In 1801 Wrangham married again—this time an heiress. Dorothy Cayley brought him £700 per annum, bore him five children, and owned a pedigree of sufficient length and distinction to stir the genealogical enthusiasm of Sir Egerton Brydges.<sup>1</sup> Wrangham was said to have a taste for aristocratic society, so that no doubt his wife's high descent gave him a certain satisfaction. But it is not uncharitable to suspect that her money was even more welcome, because it enabled him to finance his various parish benefactions and to indulge his passion for book-collecting.

In this hobby, in the society and training of his children and grandchildren, and in visits from his friends Wrangham found the pleasures of private life which most appealed to him. Here are a couple of family letters and specimens of his correspondence with Wordsworth, which will serve to show the freshness of his mind and the affectionate interest which he took in the doings of all connected with him:

*To Lucy Wrangham, his youngest child.*

My dearest little Lucy,

As you have begun to receive and are able to read letters, I hope you will be happy to have one from Parny-Pa, who very often thinks of you all and of dearest Mama, and hopes you do everything you can to make her happy, while he is away. You know how to be a good girl very well, for you have sense enough: What a sad thing then it will be, how much it will grieve Papa, and (which is of far greater consequence) how much it will offend God, who is so kind to us, if you should be naughty. Pray try to do what is right at all times, obey Mama, be tenderly affectionate to your nice kind sisters, treat

<sup>1</sup> Cf. below, p. 228.

Nancy with gentleness, and think how much all this will delight,

My dearest little Lucy,  
Your affectionate  
Parny-Pa  
Francis Wrangham.

October 29 1815.

Keep this letter, as the first you have received from me.  
God bless you!

*To his sons, George and Digby Wrangham.*

(Hunmanby)  
Thursday April 26  
1821

My dearest Boys,

This day dear Phil has left us, after a brilliant marriage (for the sky was unclouded, perfectly "Italian" as Lucy would call it)—for Brantingham Thorpe, as Mrs. Barnard. Your mother was nervous, and has gone home for a few days with Aunt Phil—and I am left with a houseful of young Ladies—Agnes, Sarah Hotham, Bell and Mary Cayley, and the two young ones—to keep in order. But I take home Agnes and Sarah Hotham on Saturday. I want you both, grave Signors, to help me to maintain proper subordination. They are just gone up stairs backward to bed, with bride-cake passed through the ring to place under their pillows, and I hear them screaming overhead.

The whole village was gathered to the Show—Bride-cake, halfpence, and silver was scrambled among the Boys and girls to a largish amount. The bells rung, the Birds carolled, and our Band of Music unsolicited (which pleased us all very much) came and played all their tunes upon the grass-plot before the dining room windows. Your uncle Arthur came over to perform the ceremony. Mrs. J. Cayley sent Phil 20 guineas for a trinker, which she has judiciously laid out in a handsome gold watch. John C. gave her a gold thimble—Aunt Phil & Mary other trinkets. Old Mr. Cayley an ornamented comb—Lady C. a bracelet—Mrs. Grimston a beautiful pair of bracelets—

and Mr. Creyke a most magnificent coral negligée—which must have cost ten or twenty pounds.

God bless you both. Ever your most affectionate father

Fr. Wrangham

I am nearly fast asleep. But I could not deny myself this pleasure of telling you how all went off.

Wrangham's friendship with William Wordsworth began during the 1790's. The former's first book of Poems, published in 1795, included a translation by the latter of *La Naissance de l'Amour*, a poem written by Wrangham in French. But the earliest fragment of their correspondence extant appears to be from the year 1808. On p. 84 of Vol. viii of T. J. Wise's *Ashley Library Catalogue*, is printed a letter from Wordsworth to Wrangham, from which three paragraphs may be extracted as providing evidence of their continued cordiality, and for the sake of the poet's comments on the clergyman's views of the War in Spain and Catholic Emancipation.

#### Grasmere

December 3rd 1808

"Your sermon<sup>1</sup> did not reach me till the night before last. I believe we have all read it and are much pleased with it. Upon the whole I like it better than the last; it must have been heard with great interest. I differ, however, from you in a few particulars; 1st the Spaniards 'devoting themselves for an imprisoned Bourbon or the crumbling Relics of the Inquisition'. This is very fair for pointing a sentence, but it is not truth. They have told us over and over again that they are fighting against a foreign Tyrant who has dealt with them most perfidiously and inhumanly, who must hate them for their worth and on account of the injuries they have received from him, and whom they must hate accordingly; against a Ruler over whom they have no control, and for one whom they have told us they will establish as a Sovereign of a free People, and who therefore must himself be a limited Monarch.

"You will permit me to make to you this representation,

*The Gospel best Promulgated by National Schools.*

for its truth's sake, because it gives me an opportunity of letting out a secret; viz., that I myself am very deep in this subject, and about to publish upon it, 1st, I believe in a newspaper for the sake of immediate and wide circulation, and next the same matter in a separate pamphlet, under the Title of 'The Convention of Cintra brought to the test of principles, and the People of Great Britain vindicated from the charge of having prejudged it'.

"You will wonder to hear me talk of principles when I have told you that I also do not go along with you in your sentiments respecting the Catholic Question. I confess I am not prepared to see the Catholic Religion as the Established Church of Ireland; and how that can be consistently refused to them, if other things are granted on the plea of their being the majority, I do not see. Certainly this demand would follow, and how would it be answered?"

From Wrangham's side, and over the next twenty years, three interesting letters and a fragment survive.

*To William Wordsworth, Rydal Mount, Ambleside.*

Feb. 15 1819  
(date written in pencil)

My dear Wordsworth,

Though I feel I have little to say, I do not like to let life slip away without interchanging occasionally some small memorial of recognisance which may at least mark that though you are distant, you are not forgotten. To borrow our allusions from Rogers' poems—though Human Life passes—to you and to me—indeed by the breadth of the whole island, the Pleasures of Memory may still be cultivated. By the bye, have you seen H[uman] L[ife]? To me, from the extracts I have seen, it appears eminently beautiful, and likely to sustain its predecessor's character. You see I dare to praise a poet to a poet. I hope you regard this as no moderate compliment to you. I should like however to know your judgment on the subject and, perhaps, some stormy or some sultry day you will give it to me. It seems almost an insult to the season to speak of

*sultriness*—for I do not mean to wait till the dog days—but really if Winter will reject his robe of white, and affect the verdure of warmer seasons, he must be content to accept the imputation of their temperature.

I hope you see *Blackwood's Magazine*—perhaps write in it—Can I bribe you to any disclosure upon this subject by telling you that I have sent two or three papers, labelled *Horae Cantabrigienses*<sup>1</sup> and Petrarch's Letter to Posterity? It appears to me to be admirably conducted, with perhaps here and there a little too much of *the gall*—and even I, Whig as to a *very moderate* degree I still continue, find infinite beauties in several of the Papers of the Political Department. I wish I knew who was their writer.

Have you peeped into Lucy Aikin's "Court of Queen Elizabeth?" It in a certain degree disappoints me, by being too much of the historic form. One looked for a little more of private manners, and anecdotes (I do not, necessarily, mean scandals) in the Memoir fashion—and a couple of centuries, spent in the very blaze of typography, have surely not sunk into utter darkness—even touchwood will carry retained light for a certain period, you know. But it is done, nevertheless, with ability, though disaffection to the Establishment now and then peeps out, as the very name of the author led one to anticipate. She negatives your sad story of the Nortons, asserting that the Father did 'certainly not perish by the hands of the executioner, and that it is uncertain whether any of his sons did'. It is true, that the old man, with three more of the family, was attainted; that his great estates were confiscated, and that he ended his days a miserable exile in Flanders. We, also, know that two gentlemen of the name of Norton were hanged at London; but some authorities make them brother of the head of the family; and two of the sons of Richard Norton, Francis and Edmund (ancestor of the present Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Horae Cantabrigienses*, Nos. I-IX, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* for August and October, 1818; April and October, 1819; June and November, 1820; January and December, 1821; January, 1824. They formed a collection of epigrams, translations, and imitations, some signed "F.R.S.", some signed "X", some unsigned. Whether Wrangham was responsible for the whole series is not known.



Grantley), certainly lived and died in peace on their estate in Yorkshire.

So much for Aikin v. Wordsworth. Let me hear your defence—or whether *vatum more* you plead the *quidlibet audendi potestas* in lieu of the allegations of History. Remember, it is to be *sumpta pudenter*—and you seem to me to be almost hyper-tragic (I do not mean, however, in its Longinus acceptance) in cutting off eight almost at one blow. It is a sort of Caligulaship, which I do not ascribe to your nature—or rather in the Rob Roy fashion—to allude to the volumes of which you furnish the mottoes—where all the young Osbaldestons die most opportunely for the hero.

I wish I had your talent for a work now in hand—I mean a memoir of Dr. Zouch, in which I would fain do justice to my impression of the character and talents of his nephew, your noble neighbour, Lord Lonsdale. The reference to a Memoir drawn up by the Uncle and Nephew in conjunction, which is by Lord L's permission reprinted in my Collection of Dr. Z's works, will furnish me with an opportunity of a well deserved compliment to his Lordship. Would that I could do it worthily.

Does your passion for old books continue? Mine grows I think by increase of what it feeds on. What do you think of 14,000 volumes and about as many Tracts collected in about one tenth of the number of volumes—most of them scarce—and several (I doubt not) unique? I wish I had you here to enjoy and to appreciate them.

And now we should have room for you. My boys of 15 and 14, after a summer tour with me, Mrs. W. and my second d<sup>r</sup> (æct. 17) through the South—including the two Universities, London, Warwick, Birmingham and Derbyshire—and a six months' reading at home, have just left me for a private Tutor near St. Neots (Mr. Brass, a pupil of Tate's, who married the sister of Mrs. Murfitt, late Vicaress of Kendal) and we have again a spare bed or two. But you never will come to revisit the church which witnessed your union with Mrs. Wordsworth and yet it is worth a pilgrimage.

Ever yours most affectionately

Fr. Wrangham.

*To William Wordsworth, Rydal Mount, Ambleside.*

Aug. 31 1820

My dear Wordsworth,

I cannot quite forgive you for having led Mrs. Wrangham, myself, two sons and two daughters a wildgoose chase to Rilston, Bolton Abbey etc. to pay our respects at the tombs of Francis and Emily Norton. The peasants, though generally intelligent, half laughed in our earnest faces, as we desired them to point out the consecrated mounds. You poets have a great deal to answer for. I shall never, I believe, feel quite easy till I have made a pilgrimage to Ennerdale, and ascertained the point where the Brother perished, and the unhappier survivor stood to hear the story.

Bolton is, indeed, a noble pile—and made infinitely interesting by a thousand recollections. My turn for romance does not decay in the proportion in which I had anticipated; after the lapse of half a century, and with the additional incumbency of an Archdeaconry on my shoulders, I look as far into a smiling futurity as ever I used to do. And, if I had not many super-added duties of late, I do think I could have mustered both spirit and money enough to have brought me on to Rydal Mount. By the bye, one of my Deaneries in the Archdeaconry of Cleveland is that of Ryedale. To my feelings toward you, which have never known abatement—this (fanciful as it is) is a gratification. We have *clomb* the hill, if not together, yet in tracks occasionally anastomosing; and we have found its upper parts not unfertile.

To you it must afford a most delightful gratification to see your brother placed, as he most deservedly is, at the head of such an establishment as Trinity College. I have two sons nearly of an age to embark on the dangerous ocean of academical life. To his auspices they will, most probably, be entrusted; and, unless my customary sanguineness deceives me, it will be no disadvantage to them in his estimation that they bear the name of Wrangham.

My late literary labours have been employed in tracts upon; i.e. against, Deism—not fewer than seven, founded on Leland, Doddridge, Bps. Watson and Butler, Paley, and Watts—in

addition to which I have completed a version of Horace's Odes in octosyllabic verses—not including, however, his unlyrical Epodes. Of these I have printed (50 copies) a specimen—the third Book. I desired a copy, if possible, to be forwarded to you, in the *full confidence* that your accustomed and affectionate friendliness would have led you to suggest whatever alteration your excellent taste and scholarship might deem necessary. If it should have reached you, know that I am impatient for your communication; if not, and you feel inclined to give me an half hour or two of your leisure—pray let me know.

And now let me expostulate with you on your handwriting. Why is it that those who can write so well in one sense, write generally so ill in another? A very little attention would enable even your demisighted friends to read without effort what now it must be rather a matter of conjecture than assurance, if ever they read it at all. Is it in illustration of the old saying *Nil sine magno vita labore* etc? You have no need to resort to the *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, or the ambiguities of an oracle.

With unaltered and very affectionate regard  
believe me ever

my dearest Wordsworth  
yours most faithfully

Fr. Wrangham

*To William Wordsworth, Rydal Mount, Ambleside.*

September 29 1827

My dear Wordsworth,

Though with two such allies as the Master of Trinity and the Bishop of Chester, the aid of a humble Archdeacon of Cleveland can hardly (I should hope) be needed, and with all his ancient feelings of friendship toward the applicant unimpaired may I fear prove ineffectual—yet will I try to serve you, after acquitting myself of a similar claim, which has now hung upon me for some time, and may but too possibly remain in abeyance for some time longer. The truth is—as I daresay you are already aware—that curacies in the Northern Dioceses

are in extra request. Those Dioceses alone admit Non-Academics into orders, so that every casual opening is filled almost before the vacancy generally transpires. My eldest son will want a *bonafide* title in a few months, after completing his undergraduateship at Magdalene College, Cambridge and I shall be enabled to offer him one of my own curacies, of which I have been hitherto the chief occupant in my own person.

You affectionately enquire after my family. Beside my eldest daughter Agnes of 26—who lives usually with her maiden aunts at their place near Bridlington, I have 5 children—the eldest, Philadelphia (25) [sic. ? 24] has been married 5 years to a Trinity man, a clergyman and a magistrate, has 4 children (a boy and 3 girls) and—as they have only a very limited income—they are now occupying my house at Chester, having lately lived a good deal under our roof.

The next George (23) will soon go into orders. The delicate state of his health, two or three years ago, interrupted his academical progress, and transferred him from the tumult of Brasenose (where his brother reaped honourable laurels) to the tranquillity of Magdalene, Cambridge. That brother, Digby Cayley W. (though only 22) fills, with I believe the highest credit, the confidential situation of Private Secretary to the Earl of Dudley, our Foreign Secretary, and in that capacity sees a great deal of Lord Lyndhurst, an old friend of mine, and the other members—particularly Lords Goderich and Lansdowne and L. Grant of the present Cabinet.

My two other children are daughters: Anne 20 and Lucy nearly 17, and I think either of them would win a couplet from you, if you knew them, from the interest of their appearance and the excellence of their dispositions and talents.

I sincerely hope you will have good accounts of yours. When are we to meet again—in this world?

How proud, with your paternal feelings, you must be of the late achievements of your gifted nephews! They honour even their poetical name.

Yours most faithfully,  
Fr. Wrangham

Hunmanby Sept. 29

I enjoy, thank God, very good health in general. My hair to be sure is gone—but then there is always, at the worst, or best, the resource of a wig. The Episcopal one, of course, is out of the question.

Professionally Wrangham went from strength to strength. Three times—in 1808, 1814, and 1823—he was appointed Chaplain of Assize to the High Sheriff of Yorkshire. This triple appointment, combined with the printing of his discourse on each occasion, was a distinction never before known. In 1814 the Archbishop of York made him Examining Chaplain at Bishopthorpe, a post he held for twenty years. In 1820 he was made Archdeacon of Cleveland and given the living of Thorpe Bassett in place of his former secondary living of Folkton. In 1823 he was presented with the stall of Ampleforth in York Cathedral; and in 1825 with an option on a Prebendal stall in Chester Cathedral, which was in the gift of Archbishop Vernon and carried with it the Rectorship of Dodleston in Cheshire. In November 1825 Wrangham succeeded to his Chester benefice, in which year he was instituted Rector of Dodleston, buying a house in Chester and resigning Thorpe Bassett in favour of his eldest son George Walter. In October 1828 the Archbishop of York promoted him from the Archdeaconry of Cleveland to that of the whole East Riding, and this important post he held to within two years of his death in 1842. In the light of this persistent exercise of archi-episcopal favour, one can believe that Archbishop Vernon meant what he said, when he declared that Wrangham was in his opinion “an ornament to my diocese”.

In mitigation of Wrangham's pluralism (which incidentally did not mean great financial profit: his laborious work as Archdeacon of Cleveland, for example, earned him an average of £18 per annum), it cannot be too strongly emphasized that he never held a preferment without performing with thoroughness and enlightenment the duties attached to it. His long period as Rector of Hunmanby left marks on parish and

church and rectory which are visible to this day, while the success of his experiment with a Village Library, a free Dispensary, and a Cow-Club stimulated similar efforts on the part of parish priests all over England.

At Dodleston in Cheshire one of his earliest acts was to erect a monument to the first Lord Ellesmere, lord-keeper to Queen Elizabeth, Lord Chancellor to James I, and founder of the great library at Bridgewater House, who died there in April 1617. The results of his Chaplaincy at Bishopthorpe and of his Prebendal activity at York and Chester, as well as the endless routine labours of his two Archdeaconries, could hardly be expected to survive for assessment a century later. But it should be recorded that as Archdeacon he issued Charges to his clergy, which for tolerance towards persons of different faith and for the stress laid on the need for simplicity of thought and words in sermon and exhortation are remarkable documents indeed for the Anglican eighteenth-centuries. His non-clerical influence over the whole East Riding was very great. For the reputation of Scarborough—both historical and hygienic—he did as much as any one in the neighbourhood. Remarkable was the number of guide-books and hand-books to the coast from Whitby to Bridlington and its hinterland, which contained a contribution by him, or a quotation from his work, or—to their own greater glory—his name as dedicatee. The Northern Sea Bathing Infirmary at Scarborough was virtually founded by Wrangham, on the principles and with the collaboration of Dr. Lettsom.

All the time he was himself an indefatigable preacher, writing a sermon with equal care, whether it were destined for his humble parishioners or for the Grand Jury and their fashionable friends or for a University Church thronged with scholars.

Reference has been made to the liberalism of mind which distinguished Wrangham throughout his life; and it is desirable somewhat to expand that reference, because the quality might well have served to retard its possessor's chances of

promotion. That in Wrangham's case it did nothing of the kind was partly due to his good fortune in working under so wise and understanding a prelate as Archbishop Vernon, but largely also to his own obvious sincerity. It was a fairly courageous act (enlightenment quite apart) for a country clergyman of considerable local reputation (and therefore a likely target for damaging criticism) to write personally to Leigh Hunt in warm support of *The Examiner*, at the moment when the paper's prosecution for sedition was immediately pending. In October 1808 Wrangham had informed Hunt that he had been active in distributing prospectuses of *The Examiner*. In December he wrote:

I am at a loss whether to sympathise with you in the way of congratulation or of condolence. Your prosecution will undoubtedly bring you earlier that celebrity which I have sanguinely anticipated for you and by all my little efforts laboured to promote.

The letter concluded:

May I beg to be favoured with your Monday edition. . . . I shall be obliged likewise for the title page, preface etc. as I shall assuredly bind you up, whatever the law may do.

Indeed Wrangham's liberalism, coupled as it was with undoubted personal integrity, unselfish devotion to duty, and attractiveness of manner and appearance, probably served to help rather than hinder him. Every one who knew him bore testimony to his blend of dignity and humour and to the kindly courtesy with which he treated even the humblest folk. As for his religious faith, it was staunch but thoroughly reasoned, and could be relied upon to give a good account of itself in any argument with dissent or agnosticism. His interpretation of the duty of a priest was based on so firm a conviction that the priestly role was ordained and necessary, that the wider its sympathies and the greater its freedom from repressive dogma, the more nearly it satisfied him. Also he was not content with expounding the Word of God; he

regarded himself as charged as much with the material as the spiritual needs of his parish. Again and again in his sermons he stresses the importance of a priestly use of simple language and concrete illustration; in the same way he strove to give practical expression to the Christian principles of helping the weak, tending the sick, and making religion part of the lives of ordinary folk rather than a weekly dose of hortatory condescension.

It followed that he believed profoundly in the spread of education; and as early as December 1802 he was preaching at Scarborough on behalf of two Charity Schools on the Advantages of Diffused Knowledge. From the more or less general argument therein developed, in opposition to the anti-educational cry that the poor were happier if ignorant, it was a logical step forward to experiment in his own parish with the provision of food for the minds of those whose minds were never fed. In October 1807 Wrangham contributed to the *Proceedings of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor* an interesting account of the creation at Hunmanby of a free Parish Library.<sup>1</sup> The following year, after preaching in York Minster before the Assize Judge and the High Sheriff, he added to the printed version of his sermon an Appendix, considerably amplifying his Village Library plan, and defending the stocking of such a library from the clerical rather than the secular standpoint, *provided that carefully chosen stories and non-fiction books of entertainment value* were allowed full representation. He insisted that the first duty of the educator is to *interest*, for to the uninterested mind improvement has no means of access.

<sup>1</sup> Here is an extract:

"I have lately founded a small parish library which I keep in my vestry, consisting of the 12 vols. of the Christian Society's Tracts; the cheap Repository Tracts; the Cottage Library; *The Pilgrim's Progress*; Gilpin's *Lives of Trueman and Atkins*; Dodderidge's *Remarkable Passages in the Life of Col. Gardiner*; *The History of Susan Grey*; *The Vain Cottager or Lucy Franklin*, etc. under an idea that the lower classes delight more in concretes than in abstracts, or in other words, that sermons are less read than tales. The schoolmaster attends on Sundays for half an hour prior to the beginning of the morning service to receive and give out such books as are returned or required, and 15 or 20 vols. are usually exchanged upon these occasions." (*Proceedings of Society for Bettering the Condition (etc.) of the Poor*, Vol. v, 1808, no. 141.)



In October and November 1817 he addressed to the *Gentleman's Magazine* two letters, the first largely repeating the text of the Assize Sermon Appendix, but both adding to the titles of works in the Hunmanby Library several of interest—two for example by Maria Edgeworth—and describing improvements in its rules of management.

Simultaneously with the establishment of his Village Library, Wrangham launched a Village Cow-Club. This he also described in a paper to the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor, and, returning to the subject elsewhere, stated that often cottagers would refuse an offer of land on which to graze a cow, for fear of being ruined if the cow suddenly died. To remove this dread he worked out a scheme by which a Fund be formed in each district from contributions from every cow-owner at the monthly rate of one half-penny per pound on the cow's value. He reckoned that by this system of insurance, a bona-fide death could be reimbursed to five-sixths of the beast's value. The Fund would be administered voluntarily by some responsible person—which person in the Hunmanby district was, of course, Wrangham himself.

His next experiment in social economics was in favour of the Savings Bank, in defence of which he wrote and published two dialogues between rustics. These are propaganda of the "before-and-after" type, and they inevitably seem a little comic to those of us who read the conversational advertisements in the modern newspapers. Thomas is the unregenerate rustic—shabby, penniless, and addicted to beer; John is the wise rustic; and Mary is John's wife. By the time John and Mary have finished with Thomas, the latter is as serene and successful as any housewife or young business man happily cured of "night starvation". "The kindest goodbye to you, Mary," says Thomas, "will be to say: God bless your husband for having showed me the road to the Savings Bank!"

Having helped his parishioners to broaden their minds, occupy their leisure, insure their cows and save their money, the indefatigable Rector proceeded to the task of caring for their bodies. To a letter of 24th August 1819, written by Mrs. Wrangham to her two sons, the father adds a postscript

We are going to have a dispensary here for the Poor in all illnesses. . . . Lyings-in etc. *gratis* to be superintended by Mr. Haggard. Mr. O(sbaldeston) subscribes 10 guineas per annum; Rev. F. W. three guineas. I trust it will do a great deal of good.

Wrangham does not appear to have made any printed reference to this dispensary, and it is fortunate that this letter survives in family possession to show yet another reason why Hunmanby had cause to feel respect and gratitude towards its priest.

It has already been said that in 1820 Wrangham was created Archdeacon of Cleveland. In 1821 he printed his first Charge to his clergy, and this document shows, with its earnest plea for the establishment of Libraries—both parochial and clerical—and of Church Schools, that wider education was still among his most cherished aims. The Clerical Libraries were to be set up in market towns and would, the Archdeacon hoped, do much to freshen the outlook and cheer the solitude of clergymen in lonely parishes.

And in addition to Libraries, Wrangham spoke of church restoration, and in a sense surprisingly modern:

Churchwardens [he said] . . . will find it economical and creditable to the Parish and (what is a far higher consideration) infinitely the most appropriate to the solemn worship of God, to preserve under the superintendence of able surveyors, the venerable architecture of our forefathers, instead of incongruously jumbling together the styles of different ages or "running up" one of those spruce and slight edifices which are occasionally obtruded on our view. . . .

But when we condemn external trimness, the neat and dry interior shares not in the reproach. In many places during my late Visitation . . . I could not help contrasting the unventilated and gloomy Parish Church—its tattered Books, ruinous Seats, green Walls, rugged Pavement, dilapidated Turrets and broken Fences—with the clean

and airy Conventicle by which it was often arrogantly shouldered.

When in 1828 he accepted the even more responsible and onerous post of Archdeacon of the East Riding, Wrangham prepared a questionnaire, which he sent ahead to every intended place of Visitation. This curious document requests information on matters absolutely consistent with his Charges to the clergy of Cleveland, and is good evidence of the consistency of his policy and the untiring energy of his talent for organization.

It is impossible to leave even so summary an estimate as this of Wrangham's practical good sense and open-minded humanity without further mention of his attitude towards Catholic Emancipation, already indicated in the letter from Wordsworth of 1808 quoted above. Over a period of thirty years, in sermons, in Charges to his clergy, as also in letters to his friends, he continually supported Catholic claims. Possibly his espousal of so unpopular a cause was the greatest of the several risks to his professional advancement which he persistently took. Actually in 1828, just after he had become Archdeacon of the East Riding, he reported that he had been in a minority of one in the Chapter at York on the question of signing an anti-Catholic petition. Yet the very next year the Catholic Emancipation Bill passed the House of Commons.

In 1840, being over seventy years of age and in failing health, Wrangham resigned his Archdeaconry and settled in Chester. In January, 1842, appeared his last book: *A Few Epigrams attempted in Latin Translations by an old pen nearly worn to the stump*. On 27th December of the same year he died.

## PART II. CORRESPONDENCE WITH SIR EGERTON BRYDGES

In 1938 one of the periodical sales took place of manuscript material from the great Phillips collection. Among the items offered was a long series of letters from Wrangham to Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges. These, together with a few tran-

scripts (from another source) of Brydges' replies, make it possible to draw a more or less intimate portrait of the Archdeacon as a member of the bibliomaniac clique of his day. The letters also throw light on the character and occupations of Brydges himself, and justify the elaboration of that portrait into a Conversation Piece *à deux*. Wrangham remains the principal figure; but in support appears the strange, exasperating yet alluring figure of Brydges who, to a degree surely unique, combined genuine love of literature and untiring industry in its service with obstinate wrong-headedness and an inexhaustible capacity for self-stultification.

\* \* \* \*

Samuel Egerton Brydges was born in Kent in 1762, and died in Geneva in 1837. His long life straddled the æsthetic, philosophical and political revolution which separated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a gulf of turmoil, conflicting passions, destruction and new idealism. In the matter of date, therefore, he was well placed to be a figure in the Romantic Movement; and faithfully he reflected some of the tendencies of that movement—in his Gothic-romantic melancholy, in his love of picturesque solitude, in his antiquarian enthusiasm for the literature and books of the past.

But there was another element in him—an element fundamental to his personality—which made him as resentful of his age as, in intellectual inclination, he was sympathetic toward it.

Coming of an ancient and aristocratic family, he grew up with social prejudices which, as time went on, became almost passionate. He hated the democratic theories and pretensions accompanying the revolution as thoroughly as he sympathized with its literary and artistic aims. This instinctive hatred of equalitarianism played a vital part in developing his passion for peerage and heraldic lore, in turning into an obsession his grievance over the failure of his family claim to the Barony of Chandos, and in bringing about his gradual exclusion from the political and social circles to which properly he belonged. In his private affairs he was equally illogical and "out of period". He had a rich mother and married two rich wives;

yet he spent, almost without noticing that he did so, his maternal inheritance and the two dowries. He was extravagant in the manner of eighteenth-century feudalism, leaving all business to lawyers and agents, and expecting that somehow or other funds would be forthcoming. When they were not, he fell into despair; and railed against abusers of his confidence and the contemptible restrictions set by bourgeois philistines on the freedom of a poetic mind.

Admittedly Brydges was not so unappreciated or unrewarded as he liked to think. His membership of Parliament left a mark on legislation, if only a negative one; he was given a baronetcy; he was asked to be an original member of the Roxburghe Club; the productions of his private press at Lee Priory were universally sought for and admired; much of his literary work was highly esteemed. But he would have been far more of a figure to his contemporaries if he had been more wholeheartedly in sympathy with the drift of social and political opinion.

Of his novels, poetry and criticism, an American commentator<sup>1</sup> has written perceptively:

Sir Egerton's characters are the victims of an elegant pen. They are driven from society to lonely places where they may pause to enjoy sorrow; they hope for a kinder fate, not greater strength for action.

Of the two thousand sonnets which he wrote in the three years before his death the same critic observes:

These poems are really the poetic diary of a veteran critic of letters, who had watched the cycles of poetic fashion for more than fifty years after the days of Johnson.

This is true of much of his other work also. Brydges as an original writer lacked mental discipline, humour and power of self-criticism. But to ignore his work because it is overfluent and derivative, to dismiss the voluminous poetry of his later years as the drooling of senility, is to ignore a valuable record of intellectual experience.

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Egerton Brydges*, by Mary Katherine Woodworth. Oxford. Blackwell. 1935.

It would appear that Wrangham and Brydges first made acquaintance (probably by letter) in the autumn of the year 1811. The Phillips letters begin in January, 1812, and have the elaborate formality and careful civility of recent contact. By the end of 1811 Wrangham had held the living of Hunmanby near Scarborough for about fifteen years, was in his early forties, and had not yet—either as author or book-collector—gained a reputation beyond certain clerical circles, a group of friends in Cambridge, and the local society of his district of the East Riding. His publications—apart from the first of his four editions of Langhorne's *Plutarch*—consisted of an early volume of poems and several sermons, no one of which was likely to have come to the notice of the group of ardent antiquarian enthusiasts which centred on London and to which Egerton Brydges belonged. Into the bargain Brydges was several years Wrangham's senior, had published a large number of books including poems, novels, biographical, political, and antiquarian works, and during the early part of their association seemed to be advancing rapidly to distinctions of a more public kind. At the end of 1811 he was elected to Parliament, where he at once became active and energetic; in 1812 he was invited to be an original member of the Roxburghe Club; in 1814 he was made a baronet. It is natural, therefore, that the clergyman's letters should at the outset show a certain obsequiousness. In those days, even a well-to-do country parson writing to a man of social position and metropolitan eminence wrote consciously as an inferior.

The first letter of the series, dated 2nd January 1812, congratulates Brydges on his successful election, and (rather pathetically) calls attention to the fact that the writer is staying with Lord Grantham at Newby Hall and is shortly moving on to Hornby to stay with the Duke of Leeds. Clearly Wrangham felt the necessity of what is nowadays called a "build-up" if he was to keep on terms with his new and desirable acquaintance. The next move seems to have a similar impulse, and to be designed to show that, country parson though he was, Wrangham could talk ancestors—at any rate ancestry by marriage—with the best of them. Shrewdly playing on

Brydges' known passion for high-sounding pedigrees, the Archdeacon asks assistance in tracing the descent from the Strangways of Harlsey Castle of his second wife, Dorothy Cayley. The bait was taken, and Brydges writes (3rd March):

I shall be happy to afford you every assistance in my power; if you will favour me with data I will carry them to the Museum. . . . The first step will be to deduce a regular pedigree from Sir James Strangways, whose country residence it will be requisite to know, that we may know what Visitation books to consult.

He adds, however, that the expense of proving any actual claim (presumably to the Strangways estate) before a Committee of Privileges is likely to prove very heavy.

Wrangham replies on 10th March:

This kind interest you take in my inquiry about the mode of tracing the Strangways line—though I may never feel it judicious to act upon it with a view to any dormant claim of my wife or children (coupled, as they very probably will be, by sub-division of a moderate fortune, with a bare competency in the next generation)—demands my warmest gratitude.

He then produces the required "data", in the form of a "few of the first steps of an old pedigree in my wife's family". These steps, with a fine lack of hesitation, lead directly backwards from Dorothy Cayley, via Sir James Strangways, to King Edward the First and Eleanor of Castile.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the splendour of Mrs. Wrangham's pretensions stunned Brydges into silence, or whether he found himself too busy to pursue his suggested researches, the problem of the Strangways-Cayley relationship and the possibility of exploiting it do not reappear in the correspondence for fourteen years. The Archdeacon has meanwhile turned to questions of authorship, literature, and bibliophily.

<sup>1</sup> The document survives among the Brydges papers in the London Library.

Broaching the question of an exchange of publications, he offers with suitable humility such works of his own as Brydges may care to possess, in return for certain works by the latter. Brydges is benevolent, but not very encouraging:

A present of your publications from yourself [he replies on 3rd March 1812] would materially enhance their value. As to mine, such as are to be had I shall feel gratified in leaving anywhere, to your direction. But a fire at Bensleys has rendered the *Censura* not now to be had, and one accident or other has taken out of the market all that were once in circulation of some others—so that of some I have not a single copy remaining; and of the greater part of the rest not more than one copy. Of the new edition of Collins's *Peerage* I will reserve a copy for you, when published.

A few months later (26th November 1812) even the offer of Collins's *Peerage* comes to grief:

The Collins was published after I left town I think in August—and I am sorry to say that, from the expense which had been aggravated by the 6 years the book was in the press, the booksellers only allowed me 3 copies, of which two had been long engaged to my two earliest friends. If I can make an arrangement with them, when I come to town, to obtain more, I shall have great pleasure in sending you one.

But the final paragraph of the same letter makes amends, by inviting Wrangham to contribute to an enlarged re-issue, under the title of *The Ruminator*, of certain papers published in Brydges' *Censura Literaria* (10 vols., 1805-9).

The Archdeacon replies on 5th December:

Though myself much occupied with various literary engagements, the care of my three parishes and the tuition



of my five children,<sup>1</sup> I cannot but accept with pleasure the offer you make me to contribute a paper to your excellent series of Ruminators.

On 10th December he forwards "the short Ruminator", and hopes he may later have a chance to write another about "the untranslatable-ness of a pun".

Brydges acknowledges receipt on 26th December:

I feel extremely obliged and flattered by your communication to the Ruminator, which I have sent to the Printer. On any subject most agreeable to you I should be doubly flattered by another paper. The Ruminators for the most part consist of moral and sentimental essays.

It is my present intention to close the Ruminator with the 100th paper. About 90 are already printed. In 2 vols. the size of Drake's Essays. Thereafter perhaps I may add a 3d volume.

*The Ruminator: containing a Series of Moral, Critical and Sentimental Essays* appeared with Longman in two slim 8vo volumes in 1813. The majority of its contents were reprinted from *Censura Literaria*, but in the second volume the authorship is more various, including contributions from R. P. Gillies, Capell Lofft, Rev. Montagu Pennington, and two from Wrangham. These last, in prose and verse, are character sketches of Mary Queen of Scots and Sir William Jones.

From now on the Wrangham-Brydges letters present a mixture of personal, literary, and bibliomaniacal themes, of which only the first are really germane to an essay in portraiture. Quotation, therefore, is confined to letters illustrating the character of the Archdeacon, with occasional evidence of his admiration for Brydges as a man, for his writings, and for the productions of his private press.

In his *Autobiography* (Vol. ii, p. 43) Brydges says:

<sup>1</sup> This "tuition" was a serious matter. Writing in 1821 the Archdeacon excuses himself for delay in progress over Walton's *Prolegomena* because he has been tutoring his sons for Oxford in "Greek Drama, trigonometry and conic sections".

Archdeacon Wrangham sometimes favoured me with letters full of elegant and varied erudition, and that amiable-ness and warmth of sentiment which shine so eminently in his character;

and the statement in its pedantic way gives a very fair description of the correspondence and its author.

Wrangham's regular and often lengthy letters give the impression of an unambitious, unassuming man—inclined to pomposity but with a gentle sense of humour, susceptible to the charms of aristocratic society but fundamentally content with a life of clerical activity and home interests. They show their writer to have been a devoted father; a voracious reader, particularly among the minor classics and the literature of the seventeenth century; a slow, deliberately polished and, by modern standards, comically diffuse stylist; and a passionate lover of books as books. Perhaps naturally, as the letters are addressed to Brydges, they express the serious and pleonastic, rather than the jocular side of the Archdeacon's character. Brydges was hardly the sort of man to whom boisterous merriment or even whimsicality would be welcome. Utterly humourless, consumed with self-pity, for ever lamenting the financial straits to which his own spendthrift mismanagement reduced him, he would have been shocked and hurt if his north-country clerical admirer had permitted the punctilious ceremony of addressing him to be tinged with sprightliness.

Nevertheless, that Wrangham was capable, even in late middle-age, of high spirits and cheerful informality is shown by two small anecdotes which an old clergyman (who was over eighty when he gave me leave to quote them) had had from his father who lived to the age of ninety-one—anecdotes, in fact, which descend direct from the thirties of last century.

The Archdeacon was due to hold a service in Old Cottam church. When he arrived, a farmer's wife met him at the door and implored him not to go into the pulpit, as her turkey hen was there sitting on a clutch of eggs. Wrangham, at the right moment, explained this situation to the congregation and added: "I don't suppose the few people here will mind not having a sermon to-day." The hen was undisturbed.

On another occasion the narrator of these stories met Wrangham riding on the road near North Grimston. They stood and talked a little, and then the Archdeacon said abruptly: "Well, I must be off. I've got to christen a child." Whereupon he put his horse at a five-barred gate, jumped it, and galloped off across the fields.

One may perhaps regret that Brydges was not one to encourage manifestations of these elements in Wrangham's nature, but to its more serious side he proved an admirable stimulus.

It has been already recorded that in 1814 Archbishop Vernon of York made Wrangham his Examining Chaplain. On 17th November 1813 Wrangham is staying at Bishopthorpe (probably the new appointment was under discussion) and writes:

I have this moment received your very magnificent specimen of writing and typography *The Sylvan Wanderer* and have had the pleasure of showing it to my most respectable host the Archbishop, Lady Harcourt and the rest of the party, who all concur with me in thinking the execution perfect.

A postscript reads:

I had the indulgence of gratifying my noble hearers with reading to them one or two of the papers last night.

This quaint extract is one of many which might be quoted showing the Archdeacon's eager approbation of Brydges' numerous and varied publications. It should also be noted as containing Wrangham's first mention of a publication from the Lee Priory Press, set up in 1813 by Brydges near Canterbury and destined to issue limited editions at a high price and in a distinctive style for the next nine years. After a trial volume, *The Poems of the Duchess of Newcastle*, of which only 25 copies were printed, the series proper (100 copies each) began with Part I of *The Sylvan Wanderer*.

Alarm lest he miss any Lee Priory issue (the editions were advance-subscribed with a speed characteristic of periods of book-market inflation) and ambition to fill the gaps in his set

find continuous expression in the Archdeacon's letters. Again and again he lists his wants; he writes to Brydges' son-in-law Barrett, who owned Lee Priory; to Triphook the fashionable bookseller of this particular inflation; even to John Warwick, the Lee Priory printer—imploping them to find a copy of this or that missing item.

But Brydges published much which, even though costly and limited in issue, was distributed through ordinary trade channels, and Wrangham, torn between economy and book-lust, kept on his track.

In April 1814 he subscribed to *Restituta* (in parts and later in 4 vols., 1814-16), and asks where and at what price he can obtain *The British Bibliographer* (in parts and later in 4 vols., 1810-14). He concludes: "The *Censura* and Dibdin's *Bibliomania* are I fear beyond the reach of purses far heavier than mine."

On 4th May he asks John Fry, the Bristol antiquarian, publisher and bookseller, to send him a copy of his new edition of Carew's Poems;<sup>1</sup> and to put him down for "the pieces of Ancient Poetry";<sup>2</sup> and for *Bibliographical Memoranda* (in parts and later in 1 vol., 4to, 1814-16), adding: "About these, from the honourable acquaintance with Sir E. Brydges and a sympathy in his pursuits, as well as a very limited co-operation in his labours, I feel much interested."

Beginning as a subscriber to the last-named work, Wrangham ended as a contributor. He wrote (and signed) three of the 107 articles,<sup>3</sup> and provided the material for four more.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Poems, Songs, and Sonnets, with A Masque, by Thomas Carew, Esq.* Fry, Bristol, 1814.

<sup>2</sup> *Pieces of Ancient Poetry.* Fry, Bristol, 4to, 1814.

<sup>3</sup> No. 68: A description of the black letter tract on the State of Matrimonye. No. 80: A description of an 8vo volume of 1561 dealing with the burning of "Paule's Church in London". No. 81: A description of a 4to of 1624 written by a Presbyter and printed in Aberdeen, showing an unusually liberal spirit toward the Episcopalian Church.

<sup>4</sup> These four, 64, 103, 104, 105, are bibliographical descriptions of rare volumes in Wrangham's library, of which he supplied title-page transcriptions and other data. The volumes are:—

Tusser's *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry*, 1576; the *Synonima* of Johannes de Garlandia, 1518; the *Equivoca* of Garlandia, 1518; and a *Mort d'Arthur* of 1529—all the three last from the press of Wynkyn de Worde.

The same day that he wrote to Fry, Wrangham wrote to Brydges himself, acknowledging the first two numbers of *Restituta*, praying not to be overlooked for copies of two new Lee Priory publications: *Excerpta Tudoriana* (of which the first part had just appeared) and *Sir Walter Raleigh's Poems* (which had been published late in 1813), and asking—a little naïvely—whether *Archaica* (in parts and later in 2 vols., 4to, 1814–15) and *Heliconia* (in parts and later in 3 vols., 4to, 1814–15), announced as forthcoming, “will be worth attention”. Receiving no reply, he writes again on 7th August, “May I ask if the *Archaica* and *Heliconia* are valuable, and whether in that case the subscription is closed?” To this inquiry Brydges (not surprisingly, seeing that he paid for ventures of this kind and wanted all the sales he could get) replied in the affirmative:

I think both the *Heliconia* and the *Archaica* worth your money if you are anxious to be rich in old English Literature. The first two parts of *Heliconia* consist of reprints of collections of which only one copy is known to exist, and the continuation will give reprints of all the rarest miscellanies of old English poetry.

The Archdeacon fell a ready victim. “Rarity” was his devouring passion. His immense library at Hunmanby and his smaller library at Chester contained few famous or, at the time, very costly books. They consisted of anything and everything irrespective of period and genre, which the Archdeacon himself—a scholar and a humanist—admired, *plus* a bulk of unpublished manuscripts, *plus* a really astonishing number of books which owed their rarity to their curious nature, or to their having been privately printed, or to their being on coloured paper, or to their having been suppressed. In the Preface to his Catalogue (1826) he quotes with approval from another collector’s catalogue:

This Collection is by no means to be considered as an Essay toward a perfect Library. Here are few publications

of great price; but it is believed that not many private collections contain a greater number of really curious and scarce books.

In short, Wrangham preferred an obscure book, which for one reason or another was (and must always remain) very hard even to find, to a notorious high-spot which—though also of great rarity—could be relied upon to head the bill in any auction or catalogue. He was the sort of bibliophile who loved to choose his own quarry and hunt it; and he measured the value of his library, not by the total of its current prices or by its place in competition with those of his book-collecting contemporaries, but by the number of ingenious discoveries and lucky captures which *he* knew that it contained.

In August Brydges sent a presentation copy of his own *Select Poems*, just printed at Lee Priory.

"For your poems", writes Wrangham, "I owe you my sincerest gratitude, not only as a collector but far more as a reader." He adds, "Some of them indeed I had read and admired in your former publications"; and one wonders whether the remark is made in gentle malice, for Brydges was an inveterate reprinter of his own poems, and in particular the sonnet "On Echo and Silence", which Wordsworth and Southey rashly admired and which in consequence appears again and again in various collections.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1816 the Archdeacon receives a presentation copy of *Desultoria*, a well-named little volume of melancholy Brydgesiana, printed at Lee Priory. Opening it, he is staggered to find it dedicated to himself, and on the 17th writes:

I was almost overpowered on opening your last cover with the very unexpected and very flattering compliment which it contained. In my capacity of a humble rustic Maecenas I have occasionally received similar attentions; but from *you*, so competent to appreciate ability (though I fear in this instance your kind partiality has misled you)

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, it was given a Latin version by Wrangham himself; this is printed in Dibdin's *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*.

and to confer distinction, who would not be proud of such a notice. . . .? You could not have conferred upon me a higher gratification than in thus publicly permitting me to subscribe myself,

your truly obliged and grateful friend.

This incident led eighteen months later to comical embarrassment over a dedicatory sonnet prefixed to one of Wrangham's own books, but between now and then we may pause to note (on 24th August) his first mention of an ambition to become a member of the Roxburghe Club—an ambition not realized until 1822. He says:

I wish my friend Heber and yourself would one day find a niche for me in the Roxburghe. I go on collecting with unabated ardour, and have really some curious books. In number my shelves hold about 12,000.

On 8th October 1816 the Roxburghe reappears:

If I belonged to the Roxburghe—an ambition I hinted when I last wrote to Mr. Heber—I should think Hornby<sup>1</sup> would be a good subject for a reprint.

The same theme occurs again on 26th February 1817, when he writes:

I yet trust circumstances may place me, if not in the Roxburghe Club, at least so as to bring me occasionally into your society. [He adds:] May I ask whether *The Sylvan Wanderer* is likely to extend beyond the two parts or *The Tudoriana* beyond the four, as if not I shall immediately put them with the rest into superb bindings?

Actually *The Sylvan Wanderer* ran to four parts and was not complete until 1821, and *Excerpta Tudoriana* to four parts, of which the last appeared in 1818.

<sup>1</sup> William Hornby, author of *The Scourge of Drunkenness*, 1618.

It is in June 1817, that the "dedication" muddle begins. Wrangham's series of translations from Petrarch is nearing completion at the Lee Priory Press. He asks Brydges' permission to add a note from the *British Bibliographer*, and says he would like to "inscribe the collection of poems to Heber, who possesses so wealthy a store of Italian literature (or perhaps better still to Roscoe because he is in adversity)". He asks Brydges' assistance in framing the dedication.

Nevertheless—and without waiting for a reply—he seems to have sent for printing a dedicatory sonnet addressed to some unspecified poet, and Brydges, writing from the House of Commons on 2nd July, says:

Your very beautiful sonnet I do assure you puzzles me as to the person to whom it is addressed. You speak of the "mysterious manner" in which you introduce it.

Whoever it is addressed to, must be proud indeed of the praise it contains: and if I had been one of those who could have ventured to indulge even in an humble and doubtful hope of ever being thought by partiality itself worthy for a moment of such distinction, the gratification would have made me amends for a thousand sorrows and a life of continued mortifications!

But it has been my misfortune to have nothing of the poetical character, but the desire and enthusiasm! From a boy, I used to dream of poetical fame—but responsible expectations being necessarily followed by disappointment, the stimulus of exertion was soon deadened in me: and all my subsequent efforts have been casual, desultory, and short. I am now coming to the close of life,<sup>1</sup> with faculties, originally feeble, evidently on the wane: and having done nothing beyond the character of a dabbler in literature.

Wrangham jumps to the conclusion that Brydges hopes the sonnet is addressed to himself, and in a considerable flutter sends almost by return of post (7th July 1817) a letter which merits extended quotation for its anxious formality, its genuine

<sup>1</sup> Vintage Brydges. He was to live almost another twenty years.



dismay at an unlucky misunderstanding, for its apologetic determination to stand by a promise:

If I had not unfortunately engaged myself upon the subject there is no one to whom—from my impression of the elegance of your taste and the tenderness of your feelings, to say nothing of the indefatigable strength and activity of your intellect, and the claims which you have established upon my gratitude—I should have more rejoiced or deemed it more appropriate to inscribe *PETRARCH* than yourself. To your intervention it will owe I fear its principal charm; and from your correction, could you have spared a few moments from your high duties, it would have derived its last and brightest polish.

But I had promised Lord Byron that to him it should be dedicated; and though subsequent circumstances may have varied our estimate of each other—though his Lordship may have pronounced me presumptuous for telling him that I hoped on some happy day to be instrumental in giving him more correct views of the religion of his native land; and I may have thought him, in his post-nuptial *démêlé* and its wretched train of consequences, far from being defensible—yet am I not released from my obligation, though perhaps—probably indeed—he will set very little store by the discharge of it. This will explain to you the asterisks, and the air of mystery which they generate. Besides it might not be quite decorous for an Archbishop's examining Chaplain to be writing sonnets avowedly to one who appears to hold ecclesiastics in no very high repute.

But the Archdeacon's embarrassment was nothing to Brydges', who on 9th July is mortified and distraught:

I am afraid I must have written something very absurd as well as nonsensical to you, tho' all traces of particulars have vanished from my memory; in truth the forms of my mind are as fugitive as the transient and changing shapes which are taken by the clouds.

If I said any thing which implied that I could for one

moment assume such praise as your Sonnet contains to myself, I must have been under the delusion of the most *absurd* vanity that can be conceived. Yet from your answer I daresay I did do so. All that I can ask of you is that you will not let such a very ludicrous scribble remain among your papers; but instantly destroy it.

This curious episode is the more curious in that Wrangham had much embarrassment with the real dedicatee—the poet to whom the Sonnet was in fact addressed.

Among Byron's letters is printed the relevant correspondence of June 1814. Wrangham applied for permission to dedicate his Petrarch translations to the poet he admired beyond all others living; but he received no reply. He then called several times at Byron's house, but failed to find him or even to be given a message. At last, seriously mortified, he wrote a final letter, concluding that the dedication would be unwelcome.

Your neglect of my note, which I trusted would have procured a moment's attention, did, I own, disappoint as much as it hurt me. If this should unfortunately experience a similar destiny, I fear that I must conclude that my poor imitations of PETRARCH are exorcised by you as well as their author, and that you are anxious to be released from the connection, slight as it may be, implied by a dedication. Perplexed as I have found myself how to characterise one, by whose matchless poetry I had found myself entirely fascinated, I shall in that case be spared no inconsiderable difficulty; but I frankly own it will be at the expense of no inconsiderable mortification.

This letter jarred Byron into regretful activity. He wrote to Rogers, begging him to soothe the Archdeacon's ruffled feelings and (presumably) to accept the dedication with suitable enthusiasm. He concluded:

You who know my desultory and uncertain habits will, I am sure, attribute [my negligence] to anything but a wish

to offend a person who has shown me much kindness and possesses character and talents entitled to general respect.

\* \* \* \*

During the next twelve months the correspondence with Brydges contains little worthy of verbal quotation. It is concerned with comments on current literature, Lee Priory issues, and Sir Egerton's conviction that his own life is a failure. Wrangham works hard collecting funeral sermons from books in his library, references to or extracts from which he sends, as possibly suitable either for separate reprinting at Lee Priory or for inclusion in *Select Funeral Memorials*, a collection of such things issued from Lee Priory in the course of 1818.

On 23rd May 1818 the Archdeacon permits himself an interesting piece of self-characterization. Brydges has apparently invited him to collaborate in some work, but he regretfully declines. He continues:

From an overwhelming load of employment, domestic, parochial and literary (including an edition of Dr. Zouch's works<sup>1</sup> with a memoir soon to be supplied and yet unbegun, and a reprint with copious notes of Walton's *Prolegomena*<sup>2</sup> still in its infancy) I have no leisure for continuous thought. . . . I difficultly elaborate an occasional sermon and feel the two which I commonly deliver at the Archbishop's ordinations, and which involve more research than an ordinary village discourse, a fearful addition to my toils.

In truth I have never been able to write with fluency, and am at all times so little satisfied with what I do write, that if I were to transcribe one of my own compositions a hundred times I should make a hundred times a hundred alterations. As a repose from other thinking, if you will kindly point out any specific volume from which extracts with an occasional comment may be made, I shall be too happy to avail you, but to the effort of a critical essay I feel myself quite unequal.

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1820.

<sup>2</sup> Published in 1827.

On 20th June Wrangham writes to condole with Brydges on the death of his son. Shortly after this affliction Brydges left England. The departure was mainly due to financial embarrassment, but the loss of his seat at Maidstone certainly helped to put him out of humour with his native land. Though regarded as merely temporary, the exile was in fact, to all intents and purposes, to be permanent. Apart from a final and tragic visit to Lee in 1826, Sir Egerton lived the remaining nineteen years of his life in Paris, in various towns in Italy, and—longest of all—in Geneva.

That there should at this point be a gap of three years in the Wrangham correspondence (from June 1818 until June 1821) is probably due to Brydges having lost or destroyed the letters while moving from place to place. There is no sign, once the letters resume, of any abnormal suspension. On the other hand they become less frequent, as would be expected in view of the difficulties of international correspondence at this date.

On 18th June 1821 the Archdeacon is in London. He writes:

I hear of you still patronising and promoting literature, not only by your example but also by your more direct labours. Your intellect never appears to sleep. I used to pique myself on *my* literary industry; but though few remit less than myself, I yet have my intervals, whereas you allow yourself no relaxation save that which arises from change of subject.

I was not myself quite without the expectation of visiting the continent this summer; but the duties of my Archdeaconry of Cleveland, which the Archbishop of York has lately given me, quite frustrate those views.

I go on collecting with undiminished industry, my present number of volumes must be near 15,000. . . .

I return to Hunmanby in about ten days, leaving all the splendours of the Coronation to eyes which love to be dazzled.

At this point note may be taken of a letter not belonging

to the Brydges series and addressed to some publisher or bookseller unnamed, possibly Longman. Writing on 31st December 1821 Wrangham says:

Pray have the kindness to send me your Catalogues as they appear, and, if not too much trouble, inform me where Miss Mary Russell Mitford lives and what she has published. I have read over and over again with intense interest several portions of her *Watlington Hill*,<sup>1</sup> and should be most proud at some future day to form her acquaintance.

The introduction was duly effected, and Wrangham and Mary Russell Mitford became close friends—at least by correspondence.

On 13th July 1822, writing from Bishopthorpe, he sends words of sympathy over the death of Brydges' daughter, Mrs. Quillinan:

You have indeed great cause to lament over such a calamity befalling such a daughter. At your table in Grosvenor Square, when I had the honour of dining with Lady Brydges and yourself, I remember well she sat next Sir A. B. They were two persons who might well have expected to survive most at the table—certainly yourself and me. May we survive to benefit by the melancholy lesson and find the indulgence which still spares us a blessing.

The year 1823 brings three letters of considerable personal interest. On 12th April Wrangham writes:

At present a sort of embargo is laid upon the friendly intercourse, for I suppose I do no injustice to foreign post offices in conceiving them occasionally to disturb the privacy of epistolary communication, so that one writes almost as Damocles supped, with a sort of feeling of *districus ensis* or whatever other weapons are wielded by the dexterity of official *curiosi*. . . . But happily I have no political

Published 1812.

secrets to impart, nor do I hear that many such are stirring. Our ministry have conciliated much favour by a judicious retrenchment of expenses—a little, you must own, forced upon them by the importunity of opposition—and a considerable reduction of taxes in consequence. Excepting a present bustle among the clergy who are vehemently crying out No Popery, there is little of public agitation to be heard of. Against the anti-Catholicism of my Cleveland Arch-deaconry I have ventured to oppose myself, and at a meeting of about 30 had ten hands in favour of toleration. If the majority are familiar with their Milton, they will parallel me I suppose with the arch-fiend as having

“drawn after me the third part of Heaven’s sons”  
—or servants. I trust your continental experience of Catholic toleration will lead you to think me justified in meditating this retribution to an oppressed portion of our fellow Christians. That praise will sustain me against the scurrilities of such nauseous journals as JOHN BULL.

On 16th May he expresses his own distaste for politics, comments shrewdly on one of Brydges’ chief weaknesses, and gives a little Roxburghe news:

From politics, like you, I abstain—not only on the ground upon which you do it of the unfair surveillance of foreign post offices—but also because I understand them far less as a science—as matter of party, hold them in equal disesteem—and in every respect think them the least suitable exercise of *délassement* for a clergyman.

Shall I confess to you that with the affluence inherited and acquired—what I would call “the realty and the personalty” of literary power which you possess—I have regretted ever since I had the honour of your acquaintance the *diffusion* of your researches? So qualified, you could have achieved very great and enduring renown by some eminently splendid work if you had concentrated your mind upon it.

Sir Mark Sykes is replaced in the Club by “the author of *Waverley*”, and to prevent the compelled disclosure of the

affected secret, in case of this literary Banquo not taking his Chair at the Clarendon, he is to be represented by Sir Walter Scott.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, writing from Henley on 27th June, he rounds off the episode of Scott at the Roxburghe dinner (the first he attended) and, being bound for Oxford to see his undergraduate sons, he confesses to a nostalgia for his own youthful days. There follows a passage unusually revealing from so reserved and self-effacing a man—almost indeed an autobiography in miniature.

Your letter found me in town. . . . At the Roxburghe dinner you were remembered, and as far as distribution was concerned, though the party was a very pleasant one, you lost nothing. We are to make it up however next year when Mr. Lloyd and myself as new members and perhaps the "Author of Waverley" may be ready. The latter, in a letter through the pen of his friend Sir Walter Scott, excused his absence. Sir W. said for himself that "to be elected a member of such a club under the existing circumstances was to him a source of greater pride than to have the Scottish novels ascribed to his pen". . . .

I had intended . . . after picking up my two Brasen Noseders, to proceed home by the way of Thirsk and to have revived (in a still stronger degree than as they exist at present) the recollections of some of my happiest years.

Not that my life has not upon the whole been a very happy one, for my disposition is naturally a buoyant one and my fortunes have been gradually and slowly mounting. That they would have risen more rapidly I can well believe if my opinions had been more in unison—actually or ostensibly—with those of the governing powers in the country. But I was bred a Whig. The lessons of Greece and Rome have no tendency to correct this propensity. . . .

What can I look to in the Church beyond my present

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Roxburghe Revels* (edited and privately printed by James Maidment in 1837), on pp. 30-2 of which are printed in full Scott's letters relating to his proposal and election. In the first of these the simile of "Banquo" is introduced.

dignity, when I am found at the head of a clerical petition in favour of inquiring into the Catholic claims and of repealing such laws and such only as the maturest deliberation may prove to be absolutely superfluous and gratuitously vexatious? My only associate Archdeacon in this feeling is Archdeacon Bathurst. But Deaneries and Bishoprics, lofty as they are, are not the highest in the estimation of those who duly consider their transitoriness.

It is another year before Wrangham provides further evidence of his own character and convictions. On 3rd June 1824, writing to Brydges at Geneva, he says:

I have always been singularly partial to biographical composition. In history . . . what do we see but a splendid Fantoccini spectacle of which the minute guiding threads and subtle springs must generally elude the keenest vision? And even if we were Lynxean enough to discern them all, what would we learn? The subjects are usually Princes, or Statesmen or Warriors, who have but too often little in common with the mass of their species. Whereas biography may give us the more excellent of the earth—nay the more gifted men—who with a better alchemy than that of Midas can turn whatever they touch to intellectual or moral gold—men without the trickery or masquerading of courts or cabinets, who owe not their majesty to the

—“king’s crown or the deputed sword,  
the martial truncheon or the judge’s robe”

—men whom we can understand and follow.

All that you relate to me about the Gibbons is highly interesting. How strange that he, who could trace with so much sagacity the alliances between what had so long been dust and ashes in the eastern and western empires, should have so mistaken his home relations!

At the beginning of 1825 (19th January) he announces that he will attend the Roxburghe dinner on 17th June (“Five



hundred miles travelling will, I trust, be a pledge to the Club of my gratitude for their kindness and my sense of their importance") and concludes with comments on Dibdin's recently published *Library Companion* and on Triphook's merger with Lackington, Allen:

Dibdin's book has met with loud commendation and perhaps scarcely less loud censure. There is a nature, however, and a good nature in all he writes, which reconciles me even to the playful verbiage of his numerous bulky and high-priced publications.

Triphook, as you will perceive, has associated himself with a new party and is become one of the priests of the Temple of the Muses. Whether he will still keep up, amidst what used to be a sort of rubbishy though enormous collection, his more delicate habits may be doubtful—or his connections. Miss Currer<sup>1</sup> is about to print a new catalogue of her books.

A letter of 11th March 1826, written from Chester to Paris, contains a quaint revival of the question of Mrs. Wrangham's pedigree, as well as remarks on current literary happenings:

May I trouble you on the next page with a pedigree of Mrs. Wrangham, which will show you that my children at least are highly descended? [The actual pedigree is very much as earlier supplied, but by the side of it is a sketch of a Coat of Arms under which Wrangham writes: "I suppose the descent does not entitle to any share in the *Arms of England*? You can tell me. But we think our children very respectable without them."]

I want very much to prevail upon you to do me a great favour and send me a poetical contribution or two for my friend Alaric Watts, who gets up annually with great brilliance of art a Literary Souvenir and wants a little strain of verse now and then to be in keeping with it.

Your letter does indeed convict Colburn of the most

<sup>1</sup> Miss Richardson Currer, Eshton Hall, Craven.

impudent charlatanism. He is truly the most frontless of quacks in the republic of letters. I wonder how he continues to get on, for there seems to be but one opinion of him. There are, however, so many Reading Clubs in England to whom periodicals are a necessary opiate, that the *New Monthly* pays, I doubt not, very well.

I have printed nothing lately, but am going on with my Walton, of which an Imperial copy in 2 vols will crave your acceptance.

With this sympathetic reception of Brydges' complaint against Henry Colburn (evidently a contribution to the *New Monthly Magazine* had gone awry, but it is less certain that the fault was Colburn's alone) the personal element in the correspondence comes to an end, and this Conversation Piece is, so far as possible, completed.

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## DISRAELI, THE STAR CHAMBER AND THE DUNCIAD OF TO-DAY

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*The essay which follows was written as an Introduction to a reprint, published by Messrs. Ingpen & Grant in 1928, of two satirical pieces, the attribution of one of which to Disraeli had been officially denied. I have not attempted to remove the traces of the argument's prefatory origin.*

*The preceding essay about Archdeacon Wrangham demonstrated how an interest in bibliography can lead on to an endeavour to reconstruct a personality. The present discussion of Disraeli's Dunciad shows that the bibliographer is sometimes enabled, by means of his hobby, to elucidate a problem of authorship. The starting point of my investigation of The Star Chamber was bibliographical. As a collector of Disraeli, I was bound to examine any publications with which, as a young man, he might have been connected. I think it may fairly be claimed that the result of this particular examination has been to establish the fact that The Dunciad of To-day was indeed written by him.*

*Presumably, when Monypenny's standard biography was reissued in two volumes in 1929 (a year after Messrs. Ingpen & Grant had published their edition of The Dunciad of To-day) the revising editor was not aware of the existence of the reprint or of this Introduction. In any event Monypenny's repudiation of Disraelian authorship was left unaltered.*

THESE TWO "anonyma" were first published in a short-lived periodical called *The Star Chamber* during the first half of the year 1826. Their intrinsic interest—and particularly that of *The Dunciad of To-day*—justifies their reissue to anyone attracted by the literature and personalities of the twenties, while a wider public may find them worthy of notice on account of the mystery of their authorship.

Into that mystery I have been compelled to adventure at

considerable length. It is impossible to debate the authorship of *The Dunciad of To-day* without at the same time debating whose personality was the real power behind *The Star Chamber*, without comparing in some detail *The Dunciad* itself with other features in other numbers of the magazine, and without referring, altogether beyond the limits of the magazine, to other publications of the time.

(i) *Bibliographical*

*The Star Chamber* ran from 19th April to 7th June 1826. It was published in Demy 8vo format ( $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ ); bore the imprint of William Marsh, 145 Oxford Street; and the complete series of its weekly issues comprised nine numbers in eight. Nos. 1 (20 pp.), 4 (16 pp.), 5 (16 pp.), 6 (20 pp.), 7 (16 pp.) and 8 (16 pp.) were issued at sixpence; Nos. 2/3—published simultaneously as a double number (40 pp., of which the last two blank and unfoliated)—at one shilling; and No. 9—a “demi-number” (12 pp.)—at fourpence. The whole series was issued in June 1826, in a single volume in paper boards with a label on the spine, lettered upwards THE STAR CHAMBER./VOL. I. PART I./Price 5s. A title-page and Contents (4 pp.) preceded the bound numbers of the magazine.

*The Dunciad of To-day* began publishing in No. 5 (of 10th May), was continued in No. 6 (of 17th May) and a further instalment was promised for No. 9, but did not appear. The satire therefore remains incomplete. The six political fables, under the general title of *The Modern Æsop*, were published, as to the first three in No. 7 (of 24th May), as to the last three in No. 8 (of 31st May). No indication was given that further fables were intended.

(ii) *The Problem of Authorship*

It has been persistently rumoured—and as persistently denied—that the moving spirit behind *The Star Chamber*, and the author of its satirical contents, was Benjamin Disraeli. That he had some slight connection with the paper and did indeed write *The Modern Æsop* is admitted; but whether his participation went further remains a matter for dispute. It is

the purpose of the investigation which follows so to marshal the evidence for and against Disraelian authorship of *The Dunciad* as to enable readers to draw their own conclusions, and to decide for themselves whether Disraeli was not in reality much more closely implicated in *The Star Chamber* than his official apologists have allowed.

Consider, first of all, the known facts with reference to the young Disraeli and to the origins of this mysterious magazine.

The year 1825 saw Disraeli in the intimate employment of John Murray, the publisher. Speculation in American mining shares had landed the youth (then a twenty-year-old lawyer's clerk) with a debt of several thousand pounds; but the influence of J. D. Powles, head of a financial house which had already promoted several mining companies, and the young man's unblushing confidence in his own capacities, encouraged him to think that a little timely pamphleteering could turn ruin to triumph and convert the debts of an ignoramus into the great fortune of a city magnate. Accordingly he prepared (and Murray published on commission) three pamphlets in the interests of the mining companies, all of which appeared during 1825. These productions had little effect on the money market; but they served to develop acquaintance between the brilliant boy-author and the important publisher, and so rapidly that by the autumn of 1825 Murray, with Disraeli as his lieutenant, was involved in the preparation of a daily newspaper to be called *The Representative* and destined to rival *The Times* as the chief conservative organ. The catastrophic outcome of this venture is well known. The extraordinary young Jew, whose fascination had bemused the experienced Murray into so unreasonable a venture, extricated himself (or was ejected) in good time from the undertaking, and sought fresh fields for personal endeavour, leaving the gentile publisher to pay the bill. Characteristically he took with him a temporary grievance against the unfortunate if credulous Murray, and all the denials in the world cannot banish the suspicion that the story of the Marquis of Carabas and his exploded ambitions, which occupy the early volumes of *Vivian Grey*, are based on memories of *The Representative*, of Disraeli's own missions to

Abbotsford and to Chiefswood, and of Murray's hopes which soared and crashed.

The writing of *Vivian Grey* was begun immediately after the breach with Murray, and the manuscript of the first part submitted to Disraeli's "Egeria"—Sara Austen—in February 1826. With elaborate precautions to conceal the authorship, she took the book to Colburn, who published it in two volumes on 22nd April. Three days earlier had appeared the first number of *The Star Chamber*.

Now the professed founder and editor of *The Star Chamber* was Peter Hall, afterward Rector of Milston, Wilts, a college friend of William George Meredith and through him acquainted with Disraeli. Hall became an authority on ecclesiastical and doctrinal history and was editor of an antiquarian magazine *The Crypt*. Sufficient traces of his archaeological tastes may be found in *The Star Chamber* to justify a belief that he had indeed some connection with it, and may likely have performed the technical duties of "editor". But that he was in any way responsible for the satirical features of the paper—and they were obviously the main reason for its existence—is inconceivable. *The Crypt* is devoid of any trace of such rapid topical pastiche as distinguishes *The Star Chamber*, and Hall's other works, alike in theme and treatment, are of an altogether different type. Similarly, though W. G. Meredith may, if one wishes, be credited with the *Star Chamber's* very occasional historical features, he never betrayed elsewhere the capacity or the inclination to write burlesque, and must surely be held innocent of *The Dunciad* and its companion-pieces.<sup>1</sup>

Disraeli remains as the only known contributor of satirical talent, and it is hard to believe, if there had been another satirist among the promoters of the magazine, that his identity should never have been revealed. Not only *The Dunciad of To-day*, but the opening dialogue "No. 112 Pall Mall", the "Notes on the *Quarterly Review*", the references to *Granby* and to W. Stewart Rose, certain of the political commentaries,

<sup>1</sup> See Note, p. 263 below.

the "Town Idyll", and various incidental paragraphs betray an imaginative swiftness and vigour which, for all their undergraduate smartness, are very noticeable. The young man who wrote those would have written other things later, and identifiably. No one has ever been suggested whom this particular cap could fit—except Disraeli. But official Disraelian tradition denies that he wore it. On what grounds? On grounds which, when we examine them, are of a singular flimsiness. Monypenny on p. 84 of his first volume thus summarises the case for non-Disraelian authorship:

A writer of an article "The New Unknown" in *The Literary Magnet* (Vol. II, pp. 1 and 129) accused Disraeli and Mrs. Austen of having tricked Colburn into paying a high price for *Vivian Grey* by leading him to believe that it was from the pen of Plumer Ward. From the same writer the legend took its origin... that Disraeli had been the first editor of *The Representative* and responsible for its failure; that he had also been editor of *The Star Chamber*... and author of *The Dunciad of To-day*, a satirical poem which provoked much resentment. The statement about *The Representative*, as we have seen, was not true. As for *The Star Chamber*, it was founded by a certain Peter Hall.... Disraeli contributed some fables with a political application under the title "The Modern Æsop", at least one review and perhaps other matter. But in later life he expressly denied (*The Times*, Nov. 3 1871, *The Leisure Hour*, Nov. 4 1871) having been editor, if indeed there ever was an editor; and in the second part of *Vivian Grey* (Bk. v. ch. 1) he declared with obvious reference to the *Dunciad* that he never wrote a single line "of the various satires in verse" that had been attributed to him and the internal evidence is in complete agreement with this repudiation.

Observe that the formal denial by the mature Disraeli was limited to the negligible question of the *Star Chamber's* "editorship"—a point of no importance by the side of the problem of the authorship of *The Dunciad of To-day* and other

satirical contributions. As for his exoneration from responsibility for the various satires, this rests merely on an indirect repudiation in a passage of *Vivian Grey* (published in the year following the appearance of *The Dunciad* and probably written very shortly after the poem was issued) and on Monypenny's personal opinion that "internal evidence is in complete agreement with this repudiation". With regard to the first—such a disavowal as that in *Vivian Grey* from such a youth as Disraeli then was cannot be taken very seriously; with regard to the second, an examination of the internal evidence will be found to permit of a different conclusion.

But before starting this examination, let me disclaim any desire to rest a pro-Disraelian case on the only forthright statement available by a known contemporary that the moving spirit of *The Star Chamber* was indeed the author of *Vivian Grey*. William Jerdan, for many years editor of *The Literary Gazette*, says in his memoirs (vol. iv. p. 80) that Marsh and Miller announced *The Star Chamber* as from the pen of the author of *Vivian Grey*. I cannot trace any such announcement, and the advertisements of *The Star Chamber* which appeared in Jerdan's own paper (*Literary Gazette*, 1st April, 15th, 29th and 6th May), and were therefore the most likely to have come under his eye, are almost aggressive in their anonymity. That Jerdan wrote inaccurately from memory, that in fact the announcements relative to *The Star Chamber* were throughout of a carefully anonymous character, is further suggested by the terms of a printed circular which was distributed in May 1826 to the few subscribers to the paper, in explanation of its discontinuance. This circular read as follows:

The design of *The Star Chamber* was set on foot about the end of February preceding its publication. The difficulty lay in securing the printer and publisher, as an idea was afloat that the work would be of a scandalous and abusive nature. After several disappointments, arising from the conscientious scruples of those who were applied to, the first number appeared on the nineteenth of April; but in



consequence of objections made by the printer to several passages that occurred in it, the copies were not ready for delivery until late in the afternoon, by which circumstance the first chance of a successful sale was materially injured. Moreover, the printer, being already in service of Messrs. Murray and Colburn, was persuaded to abandon his new employers; and his successor not being equally prepared for such an undertaking had no little difficulty in accomplishing a double number for the following Wednesday. The sale though hitherto rather heavy, now began to increase up to the seventh number, which was the best hit throughout the whole series. But "The Fielding MSS." which had raised an expectation of great popularity, so entirely failed in attracting public notice, that the authors in mere vexation resolved to adjourn. Owing to the absence of several persons concerned, the ninth number was not brought out with that spirit with which they had hoped to close their present career.

It may be judged, from the comparatively small sale of the second and eighth numbers, that very few perfect sets remain; all that were left unsold, immediately after the publication had ceased, were destroyed by the secretary.

One element in this leaflet, to which reference will presently be made, has its special significance; but as a general editorial pronouncement the document implies that, even after the magazine was dead, its promoters were concerned to hide their individuality. I think therefore we may take it for certain that no formal admission was ever made that Disraeli or anyone else had been responsible for so provocative a periodical. Believers in Disraelian authorship of *The Dunciad* must therefore, like their opponents, rely on circumstantial as opposed to substantial evidence.

Our inferential case can only be built up by degrees. If it can be established that the author of *The Dunciad of To-day* was probably also the author of various other items in the paper; and if evidence can then be produced connecting any or all of these items with Disraeli's life or Disraeli's acknow-

ledged writings, a fair presumptive case will have been presented for declaring him the author of *The Dunciad*.

(a) *The Dunciad*, lines 153-66 and notes.

A noticeable feature of *The Star Chamber* are the irritable references to W. Stewart Rose, translator of *Orlando Furioso*, and a familiar name to all readers of the life of Scott. More than one opportunity is taken of making Rose ridiculous or of striking at him through mockery of an imaginary author-manservant called 'Cosnett'.

Rose's first appearance is in the opening dialogue "No. 112 Pall Mall":

*Mr Babel*: Besides, I imagined it was quite understood that we were to leave twaddle about Dante, Petrarch and Ariosto to Stewart Rose.

Next, on p. 14 of No. 1, we read:

*Granby*<sup>1</sup> is, we understand, from the pen of Thomas Cosnett, the author of "The Butler's Remembrancer and the Footman's Directory," and is a production much inferior to this latter most useful and popular publication.

This sentence occurs in an attack on *The Quarterly's* review of Plumer Ward's novel *Tremaine* (which review praised *Granby* at *Tremaine's* expense), and in the next number of *The Star Chamber* (pp. 31-3, Nos. 2/3) that review, with the time-honoured ingenuity of unscrupulous journalism, is by implication fathered on Stewart Rose, who is given two pages of amusing castigation but not—hitherto—connected by name with the egregious Cosnett. That final twist is given in the footnote to verse 315 of *The Dunciad*. The series of pin-pricks ends on p. 116 of *The Star Chamber* (in No. 7) where "Cosnett's novel" is declared to be selling well, and references are made to "literary footmen" praised by their masters in the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh*.

Why should these continuous attacks on Rose have come from Disraeli rather than from anyone else? Can the attribution be supported either on grounds of personal relationship or style?

Stewart Rose, at this time a man of fifty, was one of Murray's

<sup>1</sup> Written, in fact, by T. H. Lister.

authors, and Disraeli's relations with the Albemarle Street circle were decidedly mixed. It was not to be expected that the older established habitués of the publisher's office should unanimously have welcomed the young Jew, who had acquired such an ascendancy over Murray himself. Among them would certainly have been one or two on the watch for an opportunity to wean their patron from his infatuation, and such an opportunity the fiasco of *The Representative* would have provided. Stewart Rose was just such an old-guard Murrayite, and it is reasonable to suspect him, either of helping to engineer Disraeli's actual disappearance from Albemarle Street or, at any rate, of so talking as to embitter Murray still further against his former protégé. Indeed it is more than reasonable; for that personal relations between Rose and Disraeli were strained during the Murray period is demonstrated by these sentences from pp. 186-7 of vol. 1 of *Vivian Grey*:

"My dear Puff, I'm quite glad to find you here," said Mr Cayenne, a celebrated reviewer to Mr Parthenopex Puff a small litterateur and smaller wit. "Have you seen Middle Ages lately?" (p. 186).

Mr Parthenopex Puff was reputed in a certain set a sayer of good things, but he was a modest wit and generally fathered his *bon-mots* on his valet Booby, his monkey or his parrot (p. 187).

Stewart Rose published in 1807 a romance in four cantos *Partenopex of Blois*; he was well known as a mediaevalist; and it requires no great stretch of imagination to parallel the valet Booby with the butler Cosnett. Finally, in the "Key to *Vivian Grey*" published in No. 7 of *The Star Chamber*, Mr. Parthenopex Puff is identified as Mr. S—— R——.

In summary, therefore, it is established (a) that *The Star Chamber* in various places attacks Stewart Rose; (b) that Disraeli in *Vivian Grey* attacks Stewart Rose; (c) that *The Star Chamber* endorses the fact that *Vivian Grey* attacks Stewart

Rose; (d) that reasons are easily imagined for Disraeli's desire to attack Stewart Rose. The concluding inference is obvious.

(b) *The Dunciad*, note on verse 178:

L. E. L. . . . a sub-urban Sappho, foundress of the INITIAL school . . . and the peculiar poetess of sentimental ladies'-maids, milliners' daughters, Brompton beauties, and Pentonville Aspasia.

Compare with this a passage in the opening dialogue of *The Star Chamber*, "No. 112 Pall Mall":

*Mr Babel*: Have you a poetess, FitzEldon?

*Mr FitzEldon*: Not yet. . . . Is there any love sick young lady in the vicinity of London, any Sappho of a suburb, whom you can recommend?

*Mr Hilary Dart*: There is a young lady, but I am not at liberty to mention her name. She will contribute under the initials of A. B. C.

These two extracts are surely from the same hand? As to the hand's identity, it was Disraeli who wrote to his sister in February 1832, about a party at Bulwer's, saying:

I avoided L. E. L. who looked the very personification of Brompton—pink satin dress and white satin shoes . . . and her hair à la Sappho.

And again in April:

The soirée at Bulwer's was really brilliant . . . a great many dames of distinction and no blues. I should perhaps except Sappho, who had thrown off her Greco-Bromptonian costume and looked really pretty.

(c) *Tremaine* and Disraeli

References to Plumer Ward's novel *Tremaine* are noticeable throughout *The Star Chamber*. In *The Dunciad* itself the book is mentioned by name (verse 166), but on p. 14 (in

No. 1) and on p. 32 (in No. 2) it is wholeheartedly praised. In *Vivian Grey* it is mentioned on pp. 149-50 of vol. 1 and on p. 153 there is an extended discussion of its authorship. Reference is made to the "rookery" which appears in it, and Ward's name is actually introduced into a list of possible writers.

Now there is excellent reason for suspecting that the young Disraeli knew the secret of the authorship of *Tremaine*, and had good cause for a desire to applaud its merits. Plumer Ward's friend and solicitor Austen was his ally in achieving publication and preserving anonymity. Austen's wife—Sara—was young Disraeli's friend and mentor, and performed the same service for *Vivian Grey* that Austen performed for *Tremaine*. Further, Isaac d'Israeli during the autumn of 1825 rented Hyde House near Amersham from Plumer Ward<sup>1</sup> and letters from Ward to Mrs. Austen<sup>2</sup> show that the elder d'Israeli became intimate with his landlord and read *Tremaine* in manuscript. Later, as a natural consequence, the author of *Tremaine* was in the secret of the authorship of *Vivian Grey*. Finally, it is recorded<sup>3</sup> that the rooks in *Tremaine* first betrayed the author's identity to one who well knew him and his way of life. Wherefore the relationship between Ward and the d'Israelis was at this time very close, and it is difficult not to regard the preoccupation of *The Star Chamber* with *Tremaine* as, by overwhelming inference, a Disraelian preoccupation.

(d) *The Dunciad*, verses 115-16 and note.

This reference to and quotation from Milman's poem *Anne Boleyn*, echo unmistakably the very long review of the work which a fortnight earlier had occupied eighteen pages of *The Star Chamber*. Note further that in vol. II of *Vivian Grey* (p. 169) 'Cleveland' is asked his opinion of this very poem, and replies: "I think it's the dullest work on the Catholic question that has yet appeared."

Milman—like Stewart Rose—was a Murray author of

<sup>1</sup> Monypenny, I. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Phipps, *Memoir of R. Plumer Ward*, vol. II, 108 seq.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 113 note.

senior standing and, into the bargain, one of the publisher's "readers". Disraeli's later comments on this same Milman's kind reception of *Contarini Fleming* show him a little ashamed of his former scurrilities and now anxious to respond—with the ready amiability of his race—to the friendliness of one who may well previously have disapproved of him.

(e) *The Dunciad*, verses 349-50:

A lord! a lord!—what means that noise and bustle!  
"Don Carlos, Sir, a tragedy by RUSSELL."

And the note:

DON CARLOS, a Tragedy, by LORD JOHN RUSSELL,—the feeblest production of the present day though perhaps we might quote, as an exception to this remark, the "Nun of Arrouca", a prose tale, by the same noble author. Oh! my good Lord John, if you must amuse yourself by scribbling, stick to the compilation of post octavo memoirs.

Compare with these a passage in *The Letters of Runnymede*, published anonymously in *The Times* during 1836 and in book form in the same year. Although Disraeli never formally acknowledged his identity with "Runnymede", his authorship of the letters is undisputed. In the open letter to Lord John Russell occurs the following passage:

When you returned from Spain the solitary life of travel and the inspiration of a romantic country acting upon your ambition had persuaded you that you were a great poet; your intellect, in consequence, produced the feeblest tragedy in our language. The reception of *Don Carlos* only convinced your ambition that your imaginative powers had been improperly directed. . . . Your intellect in consequence produced the feeblest romance in our literature ["The Nun of Arrouca"].

Further inferences as to Disraelian authorship could be drawn from incidental features of *The Dunciad*, though with

less telling effect. It is more useful to note such traces of his mind as appear in other parts of *The Star Chamber*.

(a) On pp. 28-9 (in No. 2/3), on pp. 67-8 (in No. 4), on p. 85 (in No. 5), are comments on the finance, parliamentary influence and personalities of the numerous American Mining Companies. Such material would only have found a place in a paper of the type of *The Star Chamber* at the especial desire of someone interested in the subject and able to please himself as to the magazine's contents. The theme of these comments is quite foreign to the general tenor of the paper, and their nature is at once amateurish and highly specialized. They read like the work of one who has deliberately "got up" a subject, and wishes to exploit every detail of his knowledge. They are also not free from the waspishness of personal grievance. Finally, they mention by name several of the individuals who are listed as directors and officials of mining companies in the pamphlets written by Disraeli for his then protector Powles during the speculation fever of 1825.

(b) On p. 105 of *The Star Chamber* (in No. 6) is a very laudatory review of the second edition of Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, just published by Murray. The publisher is lavishly complimented on his taste and liberality in thus "furnishing forth an admirable work"; Maclise's illustrations are applauded and the book itself is declared one which "everybody must purchase". It was on Disraeli's advice that Murray in 1825 accepted this book for publication (cf. Monypenny, I. 61, note). It sold well, and Disraeli would not be loth to remind the publisher with whom he had quarrelled of one of the few results of their former intimacy which had not involved Albemarle Street in loss.

(c) The circular already quoted which announced the discontinuance of *The Star Chamber* describes a necessary change of printer between the issue of Nos. 1 and 2/3 because the printer of No. 1 "being already in the service of Messrs. Murray and Colburn was persuaded to abandon his new

employers". No. 1 of *The Star Chamber* was printed by the well-known firm of publisher-printers S. & R. Bentley of Dorset Street. The remaining numbers of the magazine were printed by B. Johnson of Beaufort Buildings. Not only did S. & R. Bentley print extensively for Murray and for Colburn, they were also hardly the type of firm, being book-printers on a large scale and not jobbers, to which a group of young men would naturally apply for the production of a little magazine *unless one of the group had prior acquaintance with and personal access to the directors*. Such acquaintance and access Disraeli, after his months of work in Murray's office, would certainly have had.

In the next place why should Murray (or Murray and Colburn, if indeed Colburn took any part in the protest) go to the trouble of influencing Messrs. Bentley against an obscure periodical, unless the identity of the promoter was known and disagreeable to him? The first number of *The Star Chamber* contains nothing sufficiently important to induce a big and busy publisher to black-list the magazine at second hand. Admittedly there is an attack on *The Quarterly*, and the opening dialogue makes fun of certain of Murray's authors; but, conversely, the literary notes compliment Murray on several of his books, among them "Denham's work"—a reference to Denham, Clapperton and Oudeney's *Travels in Northern and Central Africa*. This work, first serialised in the *Literary Gazette*, was published by Murray very early in 1826 and (it may be remarked) is specially mentioned in *Vivian Grey* (vol. 1, pp. 149-50). Murray was not unused to attacks on *The Quarterly*, and it is fantastic to suppose that he would trouble to influence his printers against *The Star Chamber* on the sole ground of the contents of the first number. The only explanation possible is that he knew Disraeli was the moving spirit of the new paper, was nervously expectant that the periodical would be "of a scandalous and abusive nature", and, being at this moment greatly incensed against his late assistant, desired in any way possible to damage and to thwart him.

(d) Until the last have been left the most obvious but, in



fact, the least impressive of the various indications of Disraeli which appear in the pages of *The Star Chamber*. The frequent references to *Vivian Grey* need not by themselves be considered to support a theory of Disraelian authorship. It can be argued—and convincingly—that because Hall was a friend of Meredith and Meredith a friend of Disraeli, because the last-named actually contributed *The Modern Æsop*, and because a group of young men running a magazine will always delight to push one another's work out of all proportion to its merit—the insistence on *Vivian Grey* is a perfectly normal phenomenon and of no evidential value. It is therefore with no desire to exaggerate their implication (although cumulatively they may claim to be at least suggestive) but on obvious grounds of suitability, that the mentions of *Vivian Grey* are here recorded.

P. 11 (No. 1). *Vivian Grey* is puffed in advance.

P. 33 (Nos. 2/3). A long extract is given and the book is thrust on the reader's notice.

P. 89 (No. 5). *Vivian Grey* heads a two-page advertisement of Colburn publications. No publisher had previously advertised in the paper, and it is not easy to understand why Colburn should now have done so, had there been no personal influence at work.

P. 104 (No. 6). A brief paragraph keeps the book's name before the reader.

P. 107 (No. 6). Colburn's advertisement is repeated.

P. 114 (No. 7). "A Key to *Vivian Grey*" is published, the accuracy of which may be judged on general grounds of probability. Obviously, a young author such as Disraeli, and in the circumstances in which Disraeli found himself, would—if he were responsible for such a key or allowed its publication—be careful to mix the true with the false, and increase confusion by a candour half-real and half-disingenuous.

P. 125 (No. 7). Colburn's advertisement repeated.

It remains to sum up the results of what has necessarily been a somewhat protracted investigation.

If there are readers of the foregoing who agree that a good

presumptive case has been made out for the Disraelian authorship of *The Dunciad of To-day*, they must be asked to observe that, granted *The Dunciad*, other things also in *The Star Chamber* must be attributed to Disraeli. As already suggested, the writer of *The Dunciad* was the writer of "No. 112 Pall Mall"; and the writer of "No. 112 Pall Mall" was the writer of "Town Idylls No. I: Howell & James" (cf. incidentally *Vivian Grey*, vol. 1, p. 133). Again, it is hard not to believe that the writer of *The Dunciad* was the author of "Notes on the *Quarterly Review*", of "Cosnet (*sic*), author of *Granby*", of "The Rosary No. I", of the review of Milman's *Anne Boleyn*; and of various briefer notices. Finally, if Disraeli were not the commentator on the mining companies, it is a grave matter to imagine who was; and it is obvious that a man who could insert, several times over, articles so out of harmony with the general tone of the magazine, was a man of great influence in editorial policy and able to use *The Star Chamber* for the exercise of his particular foibles.

The motto of *The Star Chamber* itself was taken from Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*: "He would at diverse times goe into the Star Chamber as occasion would serve; there he spared neither high nor lowe, but judged every estate according to his merits and desertes."

Let the modern reader, in this matter of Disraelian authorship, go and do likewise.

#### NOTE TO PAGE 251 ABOVE

This statement is not strictly true, but the inaccuracy is too trivial to affect the argument. For the sake of exactitude, however, it shall be put on record that, as a very young man, Meredith, in collaboration with Disraeli, wrote an Extravaganza. This was a "Dramatic Spectacle" called *Rumpel Stiltskin*, of which two manuscript copies were produced, one handwritten, ornamented and illuminated by Meredith, the other (though less elaborately) by his sister. The production was imprinted: "Oxoniz 1823", and it is on record that Disraeli wrote the Arias and Songs and Meredith the remainder.



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